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THE TIMES OF INDIA

INCLUDES 4 PAGES OF BANGALORE TIMES AND 4 PAGES OF EDUCATION TIMES (*CITY AREAS ONLY)

INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

Satellite Imagery of secretive facilities in China's mountains reveals Beijing's endeavours to expand its nuclear arsenal, P 10

Kerala gives state farewell to baby who gave life to 4

Aalin Sherin Abraham, a 10-month-old infant who was declared brain-dead Friday after a road crash in Kottayam on Feb 6, has given life to four others as her parents consented to donate her organs. On Sunday evening, thousands turned up at Nedungadapally village in Puthanamthitta district to pay tributes as Kerala's youngest organ donor was laid to rest with full state honours. **P 5**

448 stressed areas in B'luru on summer alert

With summer set to tighten its grip, BWSSB has identified 448 high-alert water-stressed pockets and launched a Rs10-crore plan to prevent shortages during the next 3-4 months, **reports Hamsavenin**. Officials said these are not large layouts or entire colonies, but small, concentrated micro-pockets within larger supply zones. **P 3**

7 villagers die of jaundice in 2 weeks

Seven people, including two children aged nine and 14, have died due to jaundice in Palwal's Chainsa between Jan 27 and Feb 11, prompting Haryana to probe a possible outbreak. Bacteriological sampling of drinking water sources has begun. TNN

Another World Cup Match, Another Victory, Ishan Se

Kishan's 77-Run Lightning Strike Flattens Pak

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Colombo: It was barely five minutes after the match was over at the Premadasa Stadium on Sunday when Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube were back in the middle, bowling on the practice pitches. No over-the-top celebrations, no outpouring of emotions, just a sense of another routine victory against a Pakistan team that India don't think are their match at the moment.

The 61-run win, the fourth on the bounce after their hat-trick of victories against their once arch-rivals in the Asia Cup, have now ensured a Super-8 spot for India. A lot had happened in the build-up to this game and even on Sunday, the much-anticipated handshakes between the captains didn't happen.

While the unease off the pitch persisted, India were just too much when the ball rolled. Even a few months ago, Ishan Kishan (77 off 40 balls) wasn't even close to a spot in the Indian T20 team. But now that he is there, the 27-year old is proving that he can give his teammate Abhishek Sharma a run for his money as the best T20-opener in the world.

Abhishek's early dismissal on a slow Premadasa track could have been a big blow, but not when Ishan was in the form that he is in. The Pakistan bowlers were dealt with disdain and the cuts and sweeps that the Jharkhand boy unleashed took India to 22 runs in the first six overs, which was at least 30 over par on this track.

"The pitch was not that easy. Sometimes, you just have to believe and focus on your strengths. I was just watching the ball, sticking to my strengths and making them run as much as possible," Man of the Match Kishan said at the end of the match.

After his exit, India showed smartness to reach a total of 175 against some quality spin, pushing Pakistan into taking tremendous risks right at the beginning of their chase.

They were not up for it with Jasprit Bumrah (3-17) and Hardik Pandya (3-19) doing the early damage. The spinners, who bowled 18 of Pakistan's 20 overs, came into play for India only after the pacemen had all but sealed the deal.

"This is for India. We played the brand of cricket we wanted to play. We thought 175 was 15-20 runs over par — 185 would have made it a very tight game," captain Surya Kumar Yadav said, as the thousands of touring Indian fans went home a happy lot.

SUPER 8! In a one-sided encounter after all the pre-match build-up, India clinched its 8th win in 9 T20 WC games against Pak over the years and booked a place in the Super 8 stage. **Ishan Kishan** (left) played a sensational innings, scoring 77 off 40 balls on a turning track even as rest of India, including extras, produced 98 in 88 balls. With Pak chasing the highest target (176) set in an India-Pak T20 WC match, **Bumrah** dealt a double blow in his first over, leaving the rivals reeling at 13/3. As expected, the match began with the two sides not shaking hands

▶ FULL COVERAGE: P 12, 13

Def spend, upgrade in line with current realities: PM

'Op Sindoor Showed India's Familiarity With Tech Warfare'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi on Sunday cited the global context to argue in favour of modernising India's defence sector, while calling upon the private sector to step up its act and share the gains with workers and shareholders.

"Since Day 1, our govt has been clear — we will do whatever it takes to support our defence forces and strengthen them. Yes, this year's allocation is a record high, but viewing it in isolation only provides a limited perspective...As technology reshapes the world, our armed forces must be equipped with the best of Indian innovation and industry. As a nation that is playing an increasingly important role in the world, we have a duty to modernise our defence sector in line with current realities," PM Modi told PTI in an interview.

> Trade agreements are **significant not merely because of tariff reductions but because of supply-chain integration and market access** in advanced economies... **Indian firms must...** deepen supply-chain capabilities and **compete on quality and productivity** rather than on protected margins
> —PM Modi

The comments come in the backdrop of an increasingly-fragile world, which is undergoing a shift in the power-equations with the US and China seeking to stamp their expansionist policies, while conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia have been going on with no immediate resolution in sight. India has to contend with hostilities in the neighbourhood with cyber technology adding to challenges.

The PM referred to Operation Sindoor, which showed India's familiarisation with the tech warfare.

▶ Global integration, P 9

'Delhi Declaration' may outline global AI agenda

New Delhi: At the India AI Impact Summit 2026 here from Monday, diplomats are poised to unveil a Joint Leaders' Declaration that could reshape the global AI agenda. Instead of another long list of ethical "principles", officials said draft aims at showing how AI can deliver measurable benefits. India's message is clear — move the conversation from lofty ideas to on-the-ground action. Once the draft is official, it is likely to be called 'Delhi Declaration', **reports Manash Gohain.**

With 20 heads of state and delegations from over 45 nations expected to attend, declaration will be watched closely as a barometer of global AI cooperation. The focus will likely mirror the summit's foundational pillars (3 sutras) — 'People, Planet and Progress', emphasising inclusive growth and sustainability.

AI summit

▶ AI governance norms unveiled, P 6

▶ Sovereign AI, P 6

Notice for Birla's removal in LS likely on March 9

The opposition's notice for a resolution for Speaker Om Birla's removal is likely to be taken up in Lok Sabha on the first day of the Budget session's second part on March 9, parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju told TOI. Govt looks to get on with its legislative agenda after disposing of the move. While NDA has 295 members in 543-member LS and is likely to draw fence-sitters' support, opposition's bid is bound to fall through. **P 6**

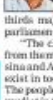
Know Mamma Karnataka?
SCAN THE O!
Scan the QR & answer the quiz question. Correct answer will be revealed tomorrow!
Yesterday's answer: Rahul Dravid

Mom at photoshoot, son drowns near studio

A three-year-old boy drowned in a pond at a studio near Magadi Road, Bengaluru, Saturday afternoon while his mother was busy watching a friend's maternity photoshoot at the same venue. **P 2**

Bangladesh wants to reset ties with India: Rahman aide

Dhaka: Bangladesh wants to reset ties with India on a fresh footing now that ousted premier Sheikh Hasina and her Awami League party are no longer in office, and the onus is on New Delhi to recognise the "changed political reality", the adviser to BNP chairman Tarique Rahman said, two days after the party won more than two-thirds majority in landmark parliamentary elections.



"The change has to come from the mindset in India. Hasina and Awami League don't exist in today's Bangladesh... The people have given a clear verdict in favour of BNP," Humayun Kabir, adviser to Rahman, said, stressing that the two nations should work together for "mutual benefit".

Kabir described Hasina, who fled to India after the 'July uprising' of 2024, as a "terrorist" responsible for the deaths of over 1,600 people. Kabir urged the Indian govt to ensure its territory is not used by Hasina or other Awami League figures in ways that could affect stability in Bangladesh.

"India must not be seen as complicit in any activities that undermine Bangladesh's sovereignty. Once that is addressed, normal diplomatic cooperation can resume. We are neighbours and should work together for mutual benefit," he added. TNN

LS SPEAKER TO REPRESENT INDIA

- BNP cabinet to be sworn in at 4pm Tuesday. Prez Mohd Shahabuddin to administer oath to new ministers
- Former PM Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman, who led BNP to landslide win with 209 seats (out of 297), set to take oath as PM
- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to represent India at the swearing-in ceremony
- Jamaat-e-Islami demands recount in 32 seats. Later, reports said Rahman met the Jamaat chief and National Citizen Party's Nahid Islam as part of a 'positive political beginning'

▶ Domestic priorities, P 9

Tiger stuck in snare found dead in C'nagar; 2nd case in 3 months

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mysuru: In the second such incident in Old Mysuru region in under three months, a tiger fell prey to poachers and was found dead with a snare in Gundal dam near Kollegal in Chamarajanagar district on Sunday.

In December, a tiger was found dead in similar circumstances in Nagarahole Tiger Reserve of Kodagu district. B S Sriganth, director of Jurisdictional Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple (BRT) tiger reserve, said a six-year-old male tiger was found dead around 8.30am during patrolling by field staff.

Officials suspected the tiger might have got stuck in a snare in a nearby area and died in the dam.

The tiger's post-mortem was carried out as per the NTCA protocol.

A case was registered under Wildlife Offence Report. "There are no suspects till now. We are investigating the incident," said a forest officer.

Probe punches holes, ₹400cr B'gavi loot case falls flat

Belagavi: Nearly four months after a Maharashtra real estate agent's sensational claim that Rs 400 crore in demonetised currency was looted from two container trucks in Chorla Ghat of Belagavi district in a multi-state operation, the case fell flat after technical investigations found major discrepancies in his version, **reports Ravindra Uppar.**

Following submission of evidence before the Igatpuri court in Maharashtra Saturday, the complaint filed by Nashik resident Sandeep Patil was found to be false, leading to the acquittal of all seven arrested suspects.

Probe found inconsistencies in the alleged incident's location and travel route.

▶ Said he was attacked, P4

US confirms K'taka boy's death; no info yet, says dad

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Bengaluru: Three days after Saketh Sreenivasalah was first reported missing from Berkeley in California, the Consulate General of India in San Francisco has confirmed the 25-year-old student's death through a post on X. As of late Sunday, the boy's family in Karnataka was awaiting a formal communication.

In a post on X at 6.12am on Feb 15, the Consulate General of India said: "The Consulate deeply regrets to inform that local police confirmed the recovery of the body of Saketh."

Saketh was pursuing a post-graduate degree in Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. According to reports, he was last seen in the 1300 block of Dwight Way earlier this week before being reported missing.

'WILL HELP FAMILY'

- Saketh, 22, was pursuing a PG degree in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at the University of California
- Three days after he went missing, Consulate General of India confirms the Karnataka student's death on X
- Saketh's dad says he is yet to receive official communication; Consulate says it will provide all necessary assistance to family

When contacted by TOI, Saketh's father Sreenivasalah said he had not received any official communication — from MEA, US Embassy or from Karnataka govt — confirming his son's death. "Without asking us to confirm, how can we believe the post on X," he said.

▶ In touch with family, P 10

5 dead after car jumps divider, crashes into bus

Bengaluru: Five youths, including two teenagers, died in a road accident involving a car and a KSRTC bus near Jindal Aluminium in Anchepalya on Tumakuru Road on the outskirts of Bengaluru around 11.45pm Saturday.

According to police, the accident occurred when a Tata Indica, travelling from Nelamangala to Bengaluru, reportedly crashed into the road divider after entering the flyover on the national highway, jumped into the opposite lane, toppled multiple times and collided head-on with a KSRTC bus.

The impact of the collision was severe, leaving the car completely mangled and causing extensive damage to its front and top portions. TNN

▶ Late-night drive, P 4

₹5L lesson for e-commerce site for 'toying' with unsafe products

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Bengaluru: The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) on Feb 13 imposed a penalty of Rs 5 lakh on e-commerce platform Snapdeal for facilitating the sale of toys without mandatory quality certification.

The action followed the CCPA taking suo motu cognizance against Snapdeal (Ace Vector Limited) for the sale of toys on its platform that did not conform to the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) norms under the Toys (Quality Control) Order, 2020. The authority noted that the sale of such toys can be hazardous and may cause injury or harm to consumers.

Exercising its powers under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, CCPA conducted a preliminary inquiry. It found that under the Quality Control Order (QCO), 2020 coming into effect on Jan 1, 2021, the platform had failed to exercise due diligence. It also observed that sellers' contact details, including address, phone number and email ID, were not visible on the platform. As per BIS, toys that do not conform to compulsory standards are liable to be treated as defective.

In its defence, Snapdeal stated that it operates as an "intermediary" and a "marketplace e-commerce entity", providing a digital platform to facilitate transactions between independent third-party sellers and buyers. It argued that under the Information Technology Act, an intermediary is not liable for third-party information or content hosted on its platform. Snapdeal submitted that all activities related to listing and sale are carried out by independent sellers, who are responsible for uploading product listings. It said it does not handle physical products, does not take possession of goods, and does not hold legal title to inventory sold by third-party sellers. Deliveries, it added, are handled by independent logistics providers with no corporate relationship with the company.

CONSUMER SAFETY RISKS

- The Central Consumer Protection Authority has fined Snapdeal ₹5 lakh for selling toys without mandatory BIS certification
- The authority found Snapdeal had failed to ensure compliance and display full seller details
- Snapdeal claimed it was only an intermediary, but CCPA noted it earned fees from non-compliant toy sales. The authority held the platform liable for unfair trade practices

However, CCPA found that Snapdeal hosted a number of sellers with inaccurate or unverifiable addresses, hindering regulatory oversight. It also noted that the company earned Rs 41,982 in fees from the sale of non-compliant toys, indicating commercial benefit from products sold in violation of quality standards.

The consumer authority further observed that toys without the BIS mark continued to be listed, advertised, and offered for sale on the platform as recently as Dec 2025. It held that this could mislead consumers by creating a false impression of quality and safety.

Misleading advertisements

CCPA stated that after promoting products through labels such as "deal of the day" or "toofan sales" and describing them as high quality at competitive prices, the platform could not claim to be a neutral intermediary. Such representations, while selling non-compliant toys, amounted to misleading advertisements and unfair trade practices under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the authority observed.

A bench comprising chief commissioner Nidhi Khare and commissioner Anupam Mishra imposed the penalty of Rs 5 lakh and directed Snapdeal to ensure that no non-compliant toy is listed or sold on its platform without full compliance and mandatory disclosures. It also directed the company to prominently display its contact number, email address, and the details of its grievance officer.

Newlyweds injured in gas leak explosion

Times News Network

Bengaluru: A newlywed couple is admitted to burns after a gas leak from a cylinder triggered an explosion at their rented house in Kondappa Layout, near Yelahanka, in the early hours of Sunday. The injured — Krishnaveni, 25, and Raju, 26 — are undergoing treatment at Victoria Hospital.

According to preliminary investigation, the explosion occurred between 6am and 8.30am. The two are natives of Bagepalli in Chikkaballapur district, and got married about three months ago. Raju works at a private firm.

Police said the couple was unaware of the gas leak. When Krishnaveni either switched on the light or attempted to light the gas stove, the accumulated gas ignited, triggering a sudden explosion and fire. The impact damaged part of the house wall. Krishnaveni sustained serious burn injuries, while Raju also suffered burns.

Police and fire brigade personnel rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control. A senior officer said the cylinder was intact. A case of accidental fire has been registered at Yelahanka police station and a probe is on.

Fire at furniture store

In a separate incident, an accidental fire broke out at a furniture store in Canara Bank Colony, Moodalapalya, in west Bengaluru around midnight Saturday. The fire started on the ground floor of a multi-storeyed building. No casualties were reported, though two trees in front of the building also caught fire. Fire and emergency personnel doused the blaze. The shop belongs to a person identified as Murali.

ALMANAC (16.2.2026)

Kambha Masa; 04 Shri Vishwavasu Nama Samvatsara – Uttarayana – Shishira Ritu – Tithi: Magha Krishna Chaturdashi upto 17:25 Nakshatra: Sravana upto 20:48 Yoga: Variyan upto 21:50, 27 Shatabisha upto 23:50

Rahu Kalam 7.30am — 9am

— Kl. Vidya Shankara Somayaji

Helpline hassle: Citizens flag poor redressal of complaints

Say It's Hampered By Delays In Data Integration

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Bengaluru: The integrated civic helpline of Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) — 1533 — has come under scrutiny after residents across the city complained of delayed or ineffective grievance redressal and confusion over ward jurisdiction following the recent civic restructuring.

Citizens allege that ground-level officials often evade responsibility by stating that the complaint location no longer falls under their jurisdiction under the new GBA ward boundaries. Many have taken to social media to post screenshots of unresolved complaints, highlighting gaps in coordination and accountability.

The complaints received on the GBA Sahaaya (1533) helpline and over social media are registered by the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC), a part of the Bengaluru Smart City initiative. Following the formation of GBA and the five city corporations, there was a major overhaul of civic staff posted across the city. According to ICCC staff, a major hurdle to the system's smooth functioning is the integration of the latest data, which is pending.

ICCC project manager Krishna Kumar Pasid the data on officials posted across the 369 wards was mapped by the GBA's in-house IT team onto the Sahaaya system. "The mapped data is currently in the testing phase. After completion of testing by Sahaaya, the data will be integrated into the ICCC system," he said. However, the GBA's IT unit tested the data for over a month, leading to a delay in integration.

Residents fill potholes

A group of residents waited for over two weeks after registering complaints on the helpline to get huge potholes in Ittamadu closed. However, they eventually ended up filling the craters themselves through a coordinated effort.

Dhruv Nagarajan Koundinya, a resident of AGS Layout near Uttarahalli, told **TOI** that the lack of consequences for officials who do not respond to complaints is the main factor behind their apathy. The spot, which falls under Padmanabha Nagar assembly constituency, is now under Bengaluru West city corporation limits.

"Though the response was delayed, an official explained to us that the file related to the road was recently handed over to her and that there was a proposal for concretising the stretch. She assured us that she would get the repair done by the previous contractor under the maintenance agreement, but was unsure when that would happen," he said.

Koundinya contrasted the 1533 helpline with the 112 police helpline, asserting that the latter is very responsive and effective. "Even for minor issues like traffic congestion, the response on 112 is quick. Constables fear escalation of complaints and resolve them immediately," he said.

When a complaint is not redressed in a satisfactory manner, it will be reopened and escalated to a higher level. If an assistant executive engineer closes the complaint without effectively resolving the issue, the complaint will be reopened and assigned to an executive engineer. It then becomes the responsibility of the EE to get the work done by the AEE, Kumar explained.

On average, ICCC receives around 1,000 complaints a day. This also includes complaints related to electricity, water supply, sewage, and fire emergencies. ICCC personnel maintained that even though several complaints are received on the same issue, resulting in duplication, each complaint is registered and the case monitored.

The Sahaaya helpline's call centre employs as many as 20 people, who work in shifts to receive calls from complainants across Bengaluru. Apart from the staff assigned by GBA, the call centre also has one person each from the fire department, BWSSB, and Bescom.

ICCC operations are undertaken by a private firm, which was awarded the contract for a period of three years starting in 2025. The centre functions under the Smart City project and is funded by the Union ministry of housing and urban affairs. Under the initiative, ICCCs were opened in a total of 100 smart cities across India.

IN DISARRAY: The integrated Command & Control Centre gets around 1,000 complaints a day, including those related to garbage and roads

DAILY TRACKING, LITTLE ACTION

Frustration among citizens has spilled onto social media platforms, with several residents documenting prolonged inaction. Caleb Friesen, an expat whose videos of poor walkability in Bengaluru on X went viral in the past few months, has posted a thread with daily updates on his complaint on the GBA's official portal. "Day 14 of tracking my formally registered footpath complaint. It has now been two weeks. Nobody has messaged me. Nobody has called me," Friesen posted on Friday. He had earlier posted ICCC's reply claiming the complaint was resolved, and added a photo taken by another X user showing that the spot was still unrepaired. Friesen complained about a broken footpath in Koramangala on Jan 23.

COMPLAINT LOAD
Jan 2025 — Feb 10, 2026

Faulty streetlights	Total complaints
1,04,306	3,77,451

Potholes: Approx	Garbage dumping	Garbage vehicle issues
14,000	51,488	35,457

— Source: ICCC

Boy drowns in pond while mom on maternity shoot

Times News Network

THREE PONDS ON STUDIO PREMISES

- The three-year-old boy drowned in a pond at a private photoshoot venue near Magadi Main Road, Saturday afternoon. His mother was participating in a maternity shoot
- The child, Lakshveer, was playing on the studio premises when he is suspected to have wandered to one of three ponds and slipped into the water unnoticed
- He was later found in the pond by studio staff and rushed to a hospital, but was declared dead on arrival; police said the 2ft-deep pond and its muddy base may have prevented him from getting up after slipping
- The child's grandfather has filed a police complaint, which does not place blame on the studio

Bengaluru: What began as a routine visit to a maternity photoshoot venue ended in grief for a woman from JP Nagar after her three-year-old boy drowned in a pond at a private studio in Giddenahalli, near Magadi Main Road, Saturday.

Lakshveer C had accompanied his mother, Swathi, who is seven months pregnant, to The Shire Studio, a location popular for maternity and pre-wedding shoots. Police said the incident occurred around 2.30pm.

Swathi had gone to the studio with a pregnant friend who had booked the venue for her photoshoot. Swathi's husband Charan Raj, a software engineer, had travelled to the US for work about a week earlier. Before leaving, Swathi informed him that she was headed for the shoot and took Lakshveer along.

According to investigators, Swathi was occupied with the photoshoot while the child was playing within the studio premises. The property has three small ponds. Police suspect Lakshveer may have wandered towards one of them and accidentally slipped into the water.

When Swathi could not find her son, she began searching the premises. He was later found in one of the ponds. Studio staff pulled him out and rushed him to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. Police said the pond had more than 2ft of water. Lakshveer, who was about 3ft tall, may have been unable to regain his footing, possibly getting stuck in the mud, they said.

A case of unnatural death has been registered at Madanayakanahalli police station based on a complaint filed by Swathi's father, Ramesh Babu. The complaint does not blame the studio management.

The child's body was handed over to the family after autopsy at Nelamangala govt hospital Sunday. Police said Raj has been informed and is returning to Bengaluru. Officers added that the grandparents were in shock and could not provide detailed statements. Swathi has sought time to appear before the police to record her statement.

DEVOTEES OFFER PRAYERS TO SHIVA

WITH PIETY: Devotees turned up in large numbers & performed milk abhisheka at the Shiva Temple on Old Airport Road Sunday, seeking divine blessings on the auspicious occasion of Shivratri

Shivaratri with Sri Sri

DEVOTION AT PEAK: The celebrations at the Art of Living International Centre featured guided meditations & bhajans

Thousands of devotees gathered on Maha Shivaratri for a night of meditation, music, and rituals, led by spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar at the Art of Living International Centre on Kanakapura Road, Sunday evening.

The celebrations featured guided meditations, bhajans, and Vedic ceremonies, with the highlight being the Rudra Puja dedicated to Lord Shiva. Similar pujas were organised at around 150 locations in India and abroad.

Addressing devotees, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar said Maha Shivaratri signifies the mind rising beyond the material realm and described Shiva as the essence of consciousness, devotion, and service. Saying that participating in the festival with faith brings fulfilment and joy, he added said Mahakaal "shines as the light within the hearts of yogis".

Devotees at the ashram also had darshan of relics believed to be from the original Somnath Jyotirlinga, said to have been destroyed during the 1026 CE raid by Mahmud of Ghazni.

Visitors from about 50 countries joined in chanting Rudram verses, singing, and meditation, with many describing the atmosphere as festive and spiritually uplifting.

Accident claim: HC frees insurer, holds bike owner liable

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Bengaluru: In a twist-filled compensation battle stemming from a 2009 road accident, the high court has held that the owner of an "implicated" motorcycle — and not the insurer — must pay enhanced damages to an injured stenographer, after finding evidence of collusion and wrongful vehicle implication.

Justice P Sree Sudha, while enhancing the compensation, exonerated ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company Ltd from any liability, observing that the case involved a deliberate attempt to rope in an insured vehicle to secure wrongful financial gain.

The case dates back to Aug 30, 2009, when J Subramanya, a stenographer at the office of the director, Karnataka Engineer Research Station in Krishna Raja Sagar, was travelling from Mysuru to Pandavapura. Near Hotel Maruta at Srirangapatna on the Bengaluru-Mysuru Road, his motorcycle was allegedly hit by a Hero Honda bike coming rashly from the opposite direction. In his first complaint filed the very next day, he named one Suresh as the rider of the offending vehicle (KA-11-S-9810).

However, the narrative shifted dramatically just days later. A second complaint, filed on Sept 6, 2009 by a relative, cited an entirely different vehicle (KA-11-S-6018) and another rider, S Shivakumar, as being involved in the crash.

Initially, the motor accident claims tribunal at Pandavapura awarded a modest Rs 19,850 with 6% interest in 2013 against Subramanya's claim of Rs 20 lakh. The insurer challenged the award, alleging fraud, while Subramanya sought higher relief.

After examining the records, Justice Sree Sudha concluded that the later implication of a different, insured vehicle was not accidental but intentional. "It is a clear case of implication of another vehicle which is having insurance to gain wrongfully, done in collusion with the owner of the vehicle," the judge said.

Despite the findings, the court acknowledged Subramanya had indeed suffered injuries and loss of income. Taking this into account, it enhanced the compensation to Rs 2.6 lakh with 6% annual interest. With this, the entire liability has now been fastened on the owner of the implicated motorcycle, SN Raghavendra.

KSRTC luggage fee up 15%

Times News Network

Bengaluru: From Monday, Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) will implement a 15% increase in its luggage charges.

The revised charges will apply only to luggage exceeding the 30kg free limit for an adult; children are allowed 15kg. The previous such increase was in Dec 2021. Under the new order, if a passenger carries luggage exceeding 30kg, a charge of Rs 6 will be levied for the first five stages. Every slim covered during the journey is considered as one stage. The steady climb reaches Rs 146 for stages 156 to 160 — the maximum charge under the order. The hike, as per KSRTC , is on account of the increase in diesel, staff, and other costs. "The luggage fare increase always coincides with the bus fare hike. Last year, in Jan 2025, the bus fare was increased, but the luggage fare was not. This adjustment will take effect starting tomorrow," a spokesperson said.

Hard idlis, watery sambar: Indira Canteens need a stir

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Bengaluru: Hailed once as a lifeline for the urban poor, Indira Canteens of Bengaluru are now battling complaints of poor food quality, staff shortages and crumbling infrastructure.

A visit to several Indira Canteens across the city revealed a worrying picture — watery sambar, undercooked portions, locked toilets and erratic water supply were commonplace.

Launched in 2017 to offer affordable meals – Rs 5 for breakfast and Rs 10 for lunch and dinner – the canteens cater to thousands of customers daily. As per guidelines, a breakfast should weigh 325 grams and meals 300 grams. However, customers allege these standards are rarely met.

QUALITY AT STAKE: Several customers flag report poor quality of food and hygiene issues in Indira canteens across the city

> Indira Canteens are handled by the respective city corporations, and they are working towards improving the state of affairs. All issues will be addressed
> **Maheshwar Rao** | BBMP CHIEF COMMISSIONER

Bengaluru has 198 Indira Canteens, of which 169 are operational and 29 suspended. At the Rajajinagar canteen, regular customer and daily wage worker Manjunath Gowda said, "We come here even now only because it is affordable. But idlis are often hard, and sambar is watery. For Rs 10, we don't expect luxury, but basic quality should be maintained."

Rajanna Byali, a sanitation worker and another regular customer at KR Market canteen, echoed similar concerns. Hailing from Bidar, Rajanna came in search of work in Bengaluru and worked for BBMP (now GBA) for over two years. "Sometimes the rice is undercooked, and the vegetables are very few. Still, we eat because we cannot afford hotels," he said.

"We have a canteen inside the GBA building, but the challenge is that we are not always around the GBA head office. When I head out, I search for the nearest canteen, but find most of them poorly maintained. It is a challenge for us to cook three meals a day at home because of time and cost factors. But swallowing the morsel that is served here is painful."

The cooking staff say they are stretched thin. Shobha Murthy, who has been working at the Chalavadi Palya canteen for six years, said, "We cook and serve hundreds every day with very limited staff. If one person is absent, the whole system struggles. We try our best, but resources are not enough."

She added, "Some days, our provisions also get exhausted, and then we are forced to collect money amongst ourselves, get provisions and cook food because we do not want to send people away without food. Unfortunately, the corporation does not release our salaries on time."

Water supply is another major challenge at most canteens **TOI** visited. At Chalavadi Palya, Cauvery water is unavailable and tankers supply water intermittently. "The motor pump does not work properly. We draw water manually from the sump using buckets. How long can this continue?" asked Ramesh GK, a kitchen helper.

At the Dharmarayaswamy temple ward canteen, staff admitted to hygiene issues as a foul smell from a nearby garbage dumping ground is overwhelming throughout the day. "People do not want to come here because of the foul smell. To top it up, there is a lack of proper handwashing facilities because there is no water supply, and water often trickles out of the taps, irking the customers," said a helper, requesting anonymity.

Adding to the inconvenience, none of the canteens visited had digital payment facilities. "Even roadside vendors accept UPI. Why can't Indira Canteen?" said Arif Khan, an auto driver who eats at the Indira Canteen in Banashankari.

Summer ready? BWSSB lists 448 high-alert water-stressed zones

Board Rolls Out ₹10-cr Action Plan

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Bengaluru: With temperatures climbing earlier than usual in Bengaluru, BWSSB has identified 448 high-alert water-stressed pockets and launched a Rs 10.1-crore summer preparedness plan to prevent shortages. Officials said these are not large layouts or entire colonies, but small, concentrated micro-pockets within larger supply zones.

According to IMD, daytime temperatures in Bengaluru are expected to hover between 29° and 30° Celsius. The city recorded 30° Sunday, while areas around KIA are likely to see a further rise in the coming days.

Unlike previous years, when emergency measures were triggered after complaints increased, BWSSB this time mapped vulnerable areas in advance. Most of the identified pockets are interior stretches in north and east Bengaluru, where residents depend heavily on groundwater and borewell sustainability remains uncertain. Officials said these are limited clusters where drinking water access could become critical if groundwater levels fall sharply between March and May.

To address the risk, BWSSB will deploy 1,260 mini-water tankers across its four zones. Each Sintex tank, with a capacity of 5,000 litres, will serve as a local drinking water buffer in stress-prone areas.

In addition, 117 BWSSB tankers have been earmarked for deployment, while 184 private tankers have been identified to be hired as back-up if required. About 40 additional tankers have also been arranged in anticipation of rising demand. Standard BWSSB tankers carry between 6,000 and 12,000 litres.

To improve distribution, 96 additional Cauvery water filling points are planned. The Board has also arranged filling support for 196 reverse osmosis plants across the city. Further, 47 water infrastructure works and 14 lake-filling projects are under way to strengthen local water availability during peak summer.

Officials said this year's approach focuses on decentralised storage and quicker tanker turnaround.

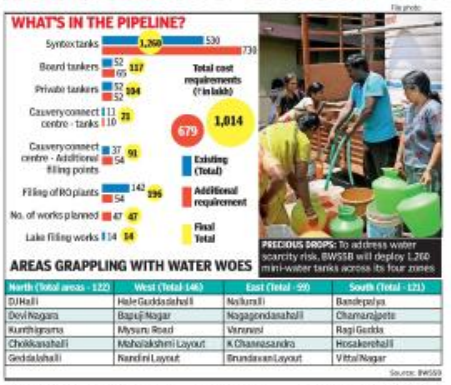
The early preparedness comes amid higher-than-normal Feb temperatures and uncertainty over groundwater levels. However, BWSSB chairman Ram Prasath Manohar V said the city is better placed than it was in 2024. "I don't see much summer difficulty for the city; we are well prepared this year," he said, pointing to improved Cauvery supply capacity.

Under the Cauvery Stage V augmentation, BWSSB now has a total pumping capacity of 775 million litres per day (MLD), of which around 400 MLD is currently being utilised. "We still have more than 40% additional pumping capacity available. Even in a worst-case scenario where groundwater levels fall more than expected, we can match the requirement with Cauvery water," he said.

One of last year's challenges was the incomplete commissioning of newly added villages under the expanded BWSSB limits. According to Manohar, most of these areas have now been integrated into the supply network. Only four villages in the east and four in the north remain pending due to land disputes. "Except those, all are fully commissioned," he said, adding this reduces overdependence on borewells in peripheral areas. Manohar has directed chief engineers, assistant executive engineers and water inspectors to conduct daily field visits to monitor supply on the ground.

He also warned against misuse of Cauvery drinking water for non-essential purposes such as car washing, stating that violators will face penalties and enforcement will be strengthened during summer.

Last year, parts of east and north Bengaluru saw borewells run dry, tanker queues lengthen and private tanker prices surge. BWSSB's advance mapping and expanded logistics aim to prevent a repeat as peak summer approaches over the next two months.



PRECIOUS DROPS: To address water scarcity risk, BWSSB will deploy 1,260 mini-water tanks across its four zones

File photo

200 companies attend workshop

Bengaluru: Over 200 organisations from within Electronics City, Bommasandra, Jigani, Veerasandra, and neighbouring industrial clusters participated in the workshop on the Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS) at IIIT-B Sunday. The event focused on assisting stakeholders to update apprenticeship reforms, thereby urging them to increase the number of apprentices and establishments under the ambit of apprenticeship. TNN

2 more VB sleeper rakes to be ready next month

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Bengaluru: While anticipation over the country's second Vande Bharat sleeper service continues, two more rakes are set to be readied by next month. This rollout from the city-based public sector undertaking (PSU), Bharat Earth Movers Ltd (BEML), will enable the second service to be flagged off.

As per BEML's original agreement with the integral coach factory (ICF) in Chennai, a total of 10 sleeper rakes with 16 coaches each were supposed to be delivered to the Indian Railways by March 31. However, sources at ICF state the deadline will be missed. "We expect the third and fourth rakes of Vande Bharat to be delivered before the end of March. For the six remaining rakes, we are trying to make sure to provide a rake every month from then on," an ICF official said.

16 COACHES EACH

"As of now, a new tentative deadline for the initial batch of 10 coaches could be Aug. Even if it is delivered from Bengaluru, they will go through trials, testing and approvals, so there is no point in hurrying or rushing," the official added.

With demand for more Vande Bharat sleeper trains, especially from Karnataka, the railway ministry officially announced plans to manufacture 200 more rakes in the future. Answering a Lok Sabha question last week, Union minister for railways Ashwini Vaishnaw stated: "Vande Bharat sleeper train manufacturing programme is being executed in a phased manner through prototype development, trials and series production by BKML & Integral Coach Factory Chennai and technology partners."

According to ICF, the project is only in the design stage and will only be taken up following the completion of the initial batch of 10 rakes. A BEML spokesperson confirmed no such order was undertaken by the PSU as of now.

Gym trainer alleges ₹16L bank fraud by pal

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Bengaluru: A 25-year-old gym trainer has approached police, alleging that his bank account was misused to channel cyber fraud proceeds after he started receiving repeated alerts from his bank about suspicious transactions.

K Solomon Robin, a resident of Williams Town near Benson Town and trainer at a fitness centre in RT Nagar, told police his colleague Waseem Akram introduced him to a man named Umar, a businessman in April 2024.

Umar, who frequently visited the gym, later sought Robin's help to open two bank accounts, claiming he needed them for business transactions to avoid tax liabilities. Trusting Waseem and Umar, Robin agreed and, along with his friend Shailesh, submitted ID proofs to open accounts at a bank in Banaswadi. Umar allegedly paid them Rs 5,000 each and took custody of the linked mobile phone and sim card, along with debit cards, passbooks and cheque books.

Robin said he initially assumed the accounts were being used for legitimate business transactions, but grew concerned after receiving bank notices seeking details of suspicious transfers.

When he contacted Waseem, he was allegedly advised to ignore and discard the notices. Matters escalated when Robin's personal bank account was frozen.

Recently, East Cyber Crime police questioned him and informed him that Rs 16 lakh had been routed through his account within a month of its opening. Waseem has been taken into custody, while Umar is believed to have travelled to Dubai. Police suspect multiple mule accounts were created and are probing the wider network.

MLA Basavaraj in seven-day police custody

Bengaluru: KR Pura MLA BA Basavaraj, who was arrested by CID in connection with the murder of rowdy-shooter Bilalu Shiva, has been remanded in seven days of police custody.

He was produced before the 42nd Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate (ACJM) at a residence in Koramangala Sunday afternoon after being discharged from Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research.

BILALU SHIVA MURDER

Basavaraj was produced around 12.30pm. During arguments in open court following his arrest, the special public prosecutor Ashok Nayak sought custodial interrogation and the CID requested nine days of custody. Basavaraj's counsel objected to the request. After hearing both sides, the magistrate remanded him in seven days of police custody and directed CID officials to produce him before the court by 1pm on Feb 21.

Basavaraj's advocate also requested that he be allowed the food prescribed by doctors. The magistrate issued directions to the CID according-ly. If he seeks home-cooked food, a separate application must be filed. TNN

4 booked for hunting Indian black turtles

Four persons were booked under the Wildlife Protection Act for allegedly hunting Indian black turtles in a river in Belthangady town, Dakshina Kannada district and preparing the meat for a ritual performed after their grandmother's death. She had died of age-related illness and was fond of turtle dishes.

The incident occurred near the Somavathi River.

Police raided the spot on Saturday while the accused were attempting to cook the meat after illegally hunting four turtles.

The accused and four seized turtles were handed over to the Belthangady Range forest department.

The department later registered a case under various provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act against Manikantha, 42, Rajendra, 54, Vignesh, 32, and Prashanth, 35. TNN

Communal tensions hurting coastal eco potential: Min

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Karnataka IT-BT minister **Priyank Kharge**'s remark that communal incidents in the coastal areas were impeding investment has drawn flak.

Speaking at a book launch here Sunday, Kharge stated Dakshina Kannada, the second largest contributor to GDP in the state, was losing out on its immense potential because of communal tensions and referenced it to an Economic Survey report.

Under the Local Economic Acceleration Programme, investors were approached to invest in the region. "When we asked for investments for Dakshina Kannada and Uttara Kannada, some said people are good and smart. They had no doubts about human resources. But they had second thoughts (about investing in the region)," he added.

"They said all was fine but, 'tomorrow when my employees wear jeans and go to lounges or restaurants, will you assure me of their security?' This is the level people are thinking about. If we need to walk on the path of financial and social equality, the environment also should be congenial to it," he further said.

The minister's statement drew flak, with some directing jibes at Kharge's Kalaburagi district. One comment said on X that Kharge's home turf is "flooded with MNCs".

Cost of AI system to track fake news sparks concern

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Bengaluru: A Rs 67-crore proposal to deploy artificial intelligence (AI) to monitor social media for fake news and misinformation has come under scrutiny with the finance department raising concerns over the high costs involved.

Proposed by the home department and approved by the cabinet, the project drew objections from the finance department over the allocation of Rs 33 crore toward software licensing for three years. The plan envisages deployment of the system across 71 locations in all 31 districts.

In one of its observations, the finance department said: "...Since this activity is to monitor websites, a central location with one license will be enough with the help of artificial intelligence. This item so identified can be transferred to districts that can take action by registering an FIR. That process can be done by integrating with the existing system."

TALKING WORE: BJP MP and former CM Basavaraj Bommai met deputy CM DK Shivakumar at his residence in Bengaluru on Sunday

Official estimates suggest each licence would cost Rs 15.7 lakh per year, totalling Rs 47.1 lakh over three years.

The finance department also flagged proposed consulting charges, suggesting the expense — approximately 15% of the total system setup cost — appeared to be on the "higher side".

It pointed out that the IT-BT department had previously spent Rs 80 lakh for a three-month period, which translated to Rs 5,000 per month. "Hence, the cost proposed in the cabinet note needs to be examined in this regard," the finance department warned.

However, defending the proposal, the home department said the licensing fee would remain "unchanged" for three years and argued that the subscription model offered greater benefits than perpetual licenses. It said the payment would ensure regular software updates and security improvements and would also cover data storage costs for the three-year period.

"More importantly, this software does not indulge in posts or creating social media awareness but uses AI to track and provide details, in near real time, of posts that indulge in misinformation, disinformation, hate speech and harmful narratives on various social media platforms," the home department said.

The department also dismissed comparisons with the IT-BT department's expenditure, stating that the Rs 80 lakh outlay was for a "pilot project" and not for full-fledged statewide implementation.

Meanwhile, the home department has agreed to establish a technical advisory panel, as proposed by the e-governance department, to examine the company selected and its software details once the tender is finalised.

To prevent maternal deaths, Ballari dist to get skills lab

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Bengaluru: Better obstetric care, supported by technological interventions, will be central to improved delivery practices at the govt hospital in Ballari — a district that was in the spotlight for a series of maternal deaths a year ago. It will allow doctors to train on mannequins before treating patients.

Last week, the cabinet approved a Rs 41.2 crore skills lab, simulation centre, and innovation incubation facility at Ballari Medical College and Research Centre (BMCRC). Dr T Gangadharu Gouda, director, BMCRC, who moved the proposal, said training will cover procedures such as conducting deliveries, intubation of patients, CPR, and management of myocardial infarction.

Dr Gouda said the use of mannequins will help strengthen clinical skills. "Ahead of medical professionals attempting procedures directly on patients, they can first practice on mannequins. This is standard practice in many countries," he said.

> The lab in Ballari will cater to medical colleges and hospitals around who want to skill paramedical, nursing staffers, doctors, postgraduates, and supers pecialists
> **Sharanprakash Patil** | MEDICAL EDUCATION MINISTER

Promotion of medical technological innovation is another key component. Mohammad Mohsin, principal secretary for medical education, said the Ballari facility will have a stronger focus on research and innovation.

"Research will be conducted on advanced equipment, computer simulations, treatment protocols, and pathological tests," he said. He added that similar labs established at Bangalore Medical College (BMC) have emerged as hubs for medical research. "BMC alone has produced around 23 research scholars a year who receive scholarships," he said.

While the department is exploring clinical trials and innovation in medical equipment, it is also considering partnering with research institutions such as IISc, CSIR, and ICMR, and possibly private collaborators.

Dr Ramesh Babu, Ballari district health officer, said the skill centre will bring state-of-the-art technology to a medically-backward region. "These simulations and innovations will not only improve access to better technology but also provide much-needed training to professional cohorts — including lab technicians and X-ray technicians," he said.

He said the 65-year-old institute has steadily grown in reputation, drawing patients not only from neighbouring districts, but also from Andhra Pradesh.

Dr Babu also pointed to the stark income inequalities in the region, saying quality public health infrastructure for the poor remains a crucial lifeline.

2 dead, 4 hurt in Mandya factory blast

Uday Kumar | TNN

Two workers died and four others suffered grievous injuries while dismantling a tank of a long-defunct chemical factory in Mandya district Sunday, police said.

Sources said the factory that was making sulphuric acid near Kavekatte, close to Basaralu, about 30km from Mandya, was shut for nearly two years. The factory had engaged a six-member team for the dismantling process.

Raghavendra BM, district fire officer, stated that during welding and gas-cutting, a storage tank exploded due to the presence of "high concentration of residual sulphuric acid" in the tank. Police said, Kallu Khan, 27, and Akash, 26, both from Bihar, died on the spot. The injured — Khasim, Mahantesh, Rajlekumar and Ravi have been admitted to Mandya Institute of Medical Sciences Hospital.

Raghavendra, along with six fire service personnel, rushed to the spot on receiving information from police. The team sprayed water and brought the situation under control. A forensic team collected samples to determine the exact cause of the explosion.

Some time ago, the factory had reported a major chemical leak that left hundreds of acres of agricultural land damaged. Though no human casualties were reported then, the incident had triggered widespread protests from local residents.

300kg illegally transported rice seized

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Udupi: Kundapur police seized 300kg of rice meant for the govt's Anna Bhagya scheme, which was allegedly being illegally transported in an autorickshaw. A case has been filed based on a complaint by Suresh HS, food inspector, Kundapur.

In his complaint, Suresh said he received a tip-off on Saturday that rice was being illegally transported to be sold near Ring Road in Kasaba village, Kundapur taluk.

Acting swiftly, Suresh put together a team comprising PSI Nanja Naik N from Kundapur police station and other staff intercepted the auto and

inspected it. Police sources said the driver, identified as Krishna Kharvi, was transporting Anna Bhagya rice in eight polythene bags without a valid permit. The total quantity seized was 300kg, with an estimated value of Rs 7,200. Police confiscated the rice.

A case was registered at Kundapur police station under sections of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

Anna Bhagya is one of the state govt's five flagship guarantee schemes, under which each member of a BPL family gets 5kg of free rice a month.

Now, tussle in BJP-JD(S) alliance over CM face

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Bengaluru: Even as internal wrangling over the chief minister's post continues to trouble governing Congress, a similar tussle appears to be brewing within the opposition BJP-JD(S) alliance. While a section of BJP functionaries is pitching state president BY Vijayendra as the party's chief ministerial face for the 2028 assembly elections, a rival camp is resisting the move.

Series of elections

The tussle is significant since a series of elections are lined up over the next two years and speculation is mounting that Union minister and JD(S) state president HD Kumaraswamy could emerge as the NDA's chief ministerial face.

BJP is set to hold a state executive meeting Thursday to chalk out strategy for bypolls in Davanagere South and Bangalore assembly seats, as well as elections to local bodies, including Greater Bengaluru corporations and panchayats.

"These back-to-back elections are ideal preparation for the 2028 assembly polls," said Shantha Gouda T Patil, president, BJP Bagalkot district. "Since it is certain we will win a majority on our own, it is the right time to talk about BJP's CM face. People's opinion is that Vijayendra, the state president, is the natural choice."

SOLACE: BY Vijayendra, after visiting the residence of MLA BA Basavaraj, who was killed in a murder case

> All that Kumaraswamy said is that the main objective is to dislodge the corrupt Congress govt. As for an alliance for local bodies polls, brass in BJP and JD(S) will take a call after consulting state functionaries
> **KA Thippeswamy** | JD(S) ELECTION COORDINATOR

The debate intensified after Nitin Nabin took over as BJP national president, with discussions on positions in the state unit gaining momentum. However, senior members have sought to downplay the speculation.

"Ours is a national party with strong leadership at the Centre. Central brass will decide on who will lead," said Aravind Bellad, deputy leader of the opposition in the legislative assembly.

JD(S) baggage?

Meanwhile, a debate over the continuation of the alliance with JD(S) is also growing louder. A significant section of functionaries is said to have argued against the alliance during a recent meeting on Greater Bengaluru elections, attended by observers led by party veteran Ram Madhav.

This section believes BJP has a fair chance of securing a majority independently and that continuing the alliance may not be politically prudent given the current political climate in the state.

"A decision on the alliance will be taken by our national brass," said Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, leader of the opposition in the legislative council. "As for who should be the CM face, it is natural that our party candidate will be chief minister if we win 113 seats (simple majority)."

His remarks assume significance since the buzz around Kumaraswamy's potential return to active state politics has grown stronger, and JD(S) is seeking to revive its pan-Karnataka presence by strengthening its grassroots. The regional outfit has planned a mega Jana Samuvesha rally in Vijayapura on Feb 27, followed by another rally in Bengaluru on March 8.

Kumaraswamy recently chaired a JD(S) meeting to review preparations for Greater Bengaluru Authority elections and he clarified that the BJP-JD(S) alliance remains intact. He also said discussions on the CM face are premature.

Good days ahead, says Yathindra

Koppal: After steadfastly insisting his father would continue as CM for a full five-year term, Yathindra Siddaramaiah, MLC, Sunday cryptically said good days lay ahead "not only for DK Shivakumar but for the state".

At an event at Beeralingeshwarn temple in Gangavathi, he said he will not comment further on the issue of change of CM. "Since I previously mentioned the possibility of a change in CM, I will not speak about it again. The state is hopeful for good things after Shivaratri," he said, without elaborating further.

Responding to criticism from opposition parties branding him as a "super CM", he said the opposition had nothing to accuse the govt of and are therefore making such remarks. He said his associates were aware that he does not interfere in govt affairs. TNN

Agent claimed he was abducted and assaulted

▶ Continued from page 1

Police investigation also found inconsistencies in call detail records, timing, and schedule. External agencies also informed police no such robbery took place during the period under review. According to police sources, Patil complained to Sheshik police on Jan 1, 2026, alleging kidnapping, assault and threats to his life.

In his complaint, Patil claimed the looting incident took place on Oct 22, 2025 when Rs 6.81 crore was being transported from Goa to an ashram in Ahmedabad via Karnataka in two containers. Patil further claimed that he was abducted and assaulted on suspicion that he knew about the alleged operation.

The Maharashtra SIT conducted a probe for nearly a month. Nashik police sought cooperation of Belagavi police in the investigation.

On Saturday, the court acquitted Kishore Suwala, Virat Gandhi, Jayesh Kadam, Vishal Naidu, Sunil Dhansal, Machhindra Madhavi, and Janardhan Bhagyade, citing lack of concrete evidence.

Now, attention has shifted to likely legal action against Patil for his complaint that kept police machinery engaged for nearly a month.

Khadi for govt staff: Surge in demand spurs fake fabric fears

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Hubballi: Complying with an order, state govt employees began wearing khadi on first Saturdays from Feb 7, but rather than spreading joy, traditional khadi makers are viewing the decision with trepidation.

While govt employees have been posting photos of themselves in khadi attire on social media platforms, khadi activists fear the sudden spike in demand will spur production of fake khadi, a problem they say has existed from Mahatma Gandhi's era.

They argue that genuine khadi makers cannot meet the surge in demand and point out that fake khadi shops have even sprouted around Vidhana Soudha. They also say the govt should have consulted khadi associations before issuing the order.

Shivanand Mathapati, secretary, Karnataka Khadi Gramodyoga Samyukta Sangh (KKGSS), Hubballi, told TOI that the association "wholeheartedly welcomed" the move since it would boost sales. "However, we are worried govt employees may buy fake khadi, which looks more fashionable and is available at lower prices," Mathapati said. "Currently, we have sufficient stock. Though the chief secretary clearly said in the order that khadi should be purchased from 176 Khadi Sanghas registered with the State Khadi Board, employees may be deceived by fake shops. Also, though the govt asserted that it will be effective from April 24, staff are eagerly buying and wearing khadi clothes from Feb 7, but most purchases were from fake khadi shops," he said.

HOW TO IDENTIFY GENUINE KHADI
- Cloth is rough
- Fewer colour options
- Highly absorbent; fibres are not compressed by machines

BOOST FOR LOCAL WEAVES: State govt employees buy khadi attire at a sale at a govt office in Bengaluru recently

Santosh Koulagi, a khadi worker from Melukote, said even cloth certified by the khadi commission is "suspicious". "Many Khadi Sanghas send yarn to mills in Tamil Nadu and buy milled cloth from there. Genuine khadi production is very minimal in the state; only handloom khadi is genuine. The other 80% is fake," he said.

He said Mahatma Gandhi himself distributed pamphlets about genuine khadi in Ahmedabad. "Khadi organisations should have been consulted. Providing an opportunity for fake khadi is an insult to Gandhi," he said.

A former member of the State Khadi Advisory Committee, said the sector today is "filled with confusion". "Many handlooms stopped in the state, and the next generation of khadi handloom workers moved to other professions," he said. "So, mill-made khadi dominates the market. It should not be called khadi, since it is just cotton cloth. If state and Union govts have real concern for khadi, they should ensure minimum wages are increased to Rs 800 per day for handloom khadi workers."

Late-night drive: Crash victims gave different reasons at home to step out

▶ Continued from page 1

Police suspect overspeeding triggered the accident. The deceased are Darnish, 17; Keshava, 19; Durga Prasad, 20; Harshith, 20; and Lalith Kamar, 23, all residents of Doddaballapura in Bengaluru Rural district.

Police said Keshava was driving the car. Joint commissioner of police (traffic) Karthik Reddy inspected the spot, though the accident occurred within the jurisdiction of the Madanayakanahalli police station (law and order). He confirmed to TOI that all five occupants of the car died in the crash.

Blood samples of the deceased have been sent to FSL to ascertain whether they were driving under the influence of alcohol. The accident spot is not under CCTV surveillance.

Bus driver Kemparaju said, "I saw the car cross the divider and crash into our bus. The windscreen shattered, and shards of glass pierced my face. I managed to apply the brakes in time, preventing further damage. There were 43 passengers on board, and a few sustained minor injuries. The impact was loud as the car was travelling at high speed, and the front portion of the bus was damaged."

FATAL TRIP: The car, travelling from Nelamangala to Bengaluru, reportedly crashed into the road divider on the flyover, jumped into the opposite lane, toppled multiple times before colliding with a KSRTC bus. The impact was severe, leaving the vehicle completely mangled and leading to death of all five boys

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND?

Police said a few among the five youths had a criminal background and were allegedly involved in theft cases. Their antecedents are currently being verified through police records. A senior officer said it is yet to be confirmed who among them were involved in the theft cases. "We are also not sure whether they were out for a joyride or for some other purpose," the officer added.

Injured bus passengers were treated and discharged.

The car belonged to Lalith, who had lacked a metal used vehicle.

An officer said the youths were reportedly on a late-night drive and had given different reasons at home for stepping out. While some told their families they were visiting a temple, others said they would return shortly.

Divider height only 6 inches: Police

Police found that the road divider was barely six inches high and lacked a metal crash barrier. An officer said authorities would be informed about the need to install a proper barrier, and if the divider fails to meet standards, a notice may be issued to the officials concerned.

Families in shock

Harshith was a second-year BCom student at a private college in Rajarajeshwari, while Lalith worked as a CCTV technician. "A grown-up son has left us," said Roopa, recalling that Lalith had breakfast at home before telling the family he was going to a temple and would return late.

Dunush's mother, Sunitha, said they learnt about the accident around 6am Sunday. "He took me and my younger son to a bakery and bought us snacks. After we returned, he said he would step out for 10 minutes. We didn't know he had gone out with friends in a car," she said, adding that she knew only two of the other boys.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2026

STALIN WRITES TO PM MODI AHEAD OF TN POLLS, PUSHES FOR EASIER CITIZENSHIP FOR LANKAN TAMILS

SUNETRA PAWAR TO MEET PARTY MLAS TOMORROW, POSSIBLE MERGER WITH NCP(SP) ON AGENDA

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'Op Seems To Have Brazenly Violated Every Rule In Book'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The US department of justice's indictments against Nikhil Gupta do not read like a high-stakes espionage thriller; they, if true, point to an amateur crude plot conceived and sought to be executed with no regard to the basics of intelligence tradecraft.

Serving and retired security establishment officials feel, going by the claims of FBI, the whole affair seemed to brazen violate every rule in the book that even rookie interns at any agency across the globe wouldn't, a recklessness that is associated with an overzealous operative in a terrible hurry who was not bothered with irritants like protocol requiring restraint.

"Forget a senior, any mid-level officer in an agency in the know would have shut it down instantly given the amount of red flags the whole thing generated," said a retired govt officer.

From the outset, the operation violated the cardinal rule of tradecraft — never link an agency directly to the street. DOJ documents show the conversation stressed on unnecessary involvements.

"Handlers never communicate directly with low-level criminal middlemen using traceable electronics. Yet, DOJ documents reveal that Vikash Yadav and Gupta exchanged routine messages on encrypted platforms that were clearly compromised," said an officer.

The handlers, sources said, always use "dead drops or cutouts" — multiple layers of individuals who don't know each other — to ensure if one person is caught, the trail to the state ends immediately.

DOJ documents show Yadav sending his own contact information and even a "selfie" to Gupta. The photograph showed him in an official military uniform, complete with visible insignia. This single act effectively handed FBI the "who" of the operation before it had even begun.

"In a real operation, a handler is a ghost; here, Yadav comes across as a digital penpal. The 'trap' was not just visible; it was screaming. When Gupta sought a hitman, he reached out straight away to a 'criminal associate' who was, in reality, a confidential source of the US's Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), a place teeming with double agents like Pakistani American Daud Coleman Headley aka Daood Gilani of '26/11 notoriety and those who have been responsible for breakthroughs in the drive against Latin American drug cartels as well as stunning failures. This source then introduced Gupta to a 'hitman' who was a DEA undercover officer," another official said. An agency would have spent months vetting these assets. Instead, Gupta and Yadav sprinted into the ambush.

The financial trail was equally catastrophic. On June 9, 2023, the conspirators arranged for an associate to hand over $15,000 in cash to the undercover agent in a car in Manhattan. This was a 'Financial Op-Sec' suicide. By moving physical cash in a place like Manhattan to a man they had never met, they turned a geopolitical plot into a common street crime captured on federal surveillance. In a real operation, money for "wetwork" is laundered through complex front companies or transferred via untraceable methods to avoid physical exposure.

Perhaps the most damning evidence of their "continuing despite the trap" was the aftermath of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar killing in Canada. Rather than going "dark" to avoid regional heat, Yadav allegedly sent Gupta a video of Nijjar's bloodied body and a message stating that the New York target was now a "priority". "By discussing an assassination so casually and explicitly linking the two hits, they surrendered all deniability and handed DOJ the narrative of a transnational repression plot," an official said.

By the time Gupta was arrested in the Czech Republic, he wasn't a victim of a brilliant sting; he was the inevitable casualty of an eagerness, whose parenthood remains doubtful, that broke basic rules while the trap was being set in plain sight.

Officials said Nikhil Gupta's operation showed a recklessness that is associated with an overzealous operative in a terrible hurry

Guilty plea may reduce Gupta's jail term substantially

New Delhi: By admitting to murder-for-hire and money laundering charges, Indian national Nikhil Gupta may have secured a substantial reduction in the 40-year maximum sentence the charges entail through an "acceptance of responsibility" credit. The guilty plea not only reduces his jail-time but also helps him avoid a high-profile trial, besides limiting his trial testimony.

Gupta, who has been at a Brooklyn detention centre since his 2024 extradition from Prague, has pleaded guilty before US magistrate Judge Sarah Netburn on three counts: murder-for-hire, conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire and conspiracy to commit money laundering. He is scheduled to be sentenced by US district judge Victor Marrero on May 29, 2026, according to a statement by FBI and DEA.

While the combined charges carry a maximum statutory punishment of 40 years in prison, a guilty plea typically triggers a reduction in the offence level under federal sentencing guidelines for "acceptance of responsibility". Legal experts pointed out this could result in a 20% to 30% reduction in the maximum exposure, though the final decision will rest solely with the sentencing judge.

"Gupta is likely to receive a 2- to 3-level reduction, the standard reward for saving the court the time and expense of a trial," said a source. Going by the US prosecutors' recommendation, a 26-year sentence or less seems likely, sources said. There could be further reduction if the state files such a motion by May 29 when the sentencing will be announced.

Gupta (34) may still have to serve around 80% of the awarded jail time with all mitigating parameters like good behaviour in place. Under US law, if he receives a sentence longer than 12 months, he would be eligible for up to a 15% reduction (roughly two months a year) for good behaviour while incarcerated.

Legal experts also said that it was yet to be ascertained whether Gupta's plea deal included "substantial assistance", which typically becomes a cooperating witness against other individuals. Pleading guilty in a US court does not necessarily require the person to provide information or testify against anyone. TOI

Everything, All At Once?

CITY CITY BANG BANG

SANTOSH DESAI

One of the paradoxes of living inside a world created by social media is that we multiply meaning even as we erase memory. Our lives are increasingly laid on a minute-by-minute basis; a tweet, an email, a new post on Instagram, a WhatsApp message, structure time for us. As editors of the world, we feel the need to comment on everything and do so with feeling and emotion. The language we use is suitably intense as we react from the outermost surface of our minds.

Everything seems to matter more. Technology has not only changed what we do, but it has also changed how much meaning we attach to what we do. Every little action of ours becomes a message; what is communicated always seems to exceed what was intended. A purchase becomes a statement. A photograph becomes a performance. A WhatsApp message not answered immediately also becomes a signal. Technology has not merely added convenience to our lives; it has multiplied the field of meaning within which the individual operates. There is a noise to our existence today, a constant sense of emotional engagement.

This changes the meaning of many ideas. What it means to be visible, connected, informed, successful, and modern—these were once relatively settled categories. Now they are constantly shifting, absorbing new behaviours faster than we can make sense of them. Each person becomes a publisher, a performer, a small but persistent presence in a shared symbolic space.

This effect is especially strong because digital technology is unlike anything that came before it. Other technologies live with us; this is the first time we live inside. A car or a refrigerator changes the world around us. Digital technology alters the atmosphere in which we think and feel. We do not stop into a washing machine, but we step into a feed. When a technology becomes an environment, it reshapes us from within.

Living inside this environment produces a distinctive emotional climate. The ordinary becomes performative. The private becomes shareable. The fleeting becomes archival. The peripheral moves to the centre. Nothing is allowed to remain small. Desire, envy, belonging and grievance all acquire a brightness we are not naturally equipped to process.

The need to respond creates a sense of being in a state of constant mobilisation, as we judge which provocation is worthy of what kinded response. We are both jury and accused, as we judge and are judged; reflection gets increasingly crowded by this need for evaluation. Opinion frames reflection, and increasingly it is rooted in

Technology has not only changed what we do, but it has also changed how much meaning we attach to what we do. Every little action of ours becomes a message; what is communicated always seems to exceed what was intended. A purchase becomes a statement. A message not answered immediately also becomes a signal

identity rather than thought. Reflexive reactions coming from what one belongs to rather than from what one understands and believes become the norm.

Public discourse reflects this change. Earlier, what was significant was determined by a small group of gatekeepers. Arguments were mediated, filtered and presented with evidence. The public discourse was admittedly shaped by this small elite, but the right to broadcast had to be earned by following certain standards and norms. Today, the centre of gravity has shifted. With digital technology, everyone is potentially a broadcaster. There is a visible lowering of the epistemic average— a surge of immediacy, the unfiltered arrival of personal emotion into the public sphere. Discourse is no longer anchored by hierarchy or expertise; it is carried by the widest emotional denominator.

This is where a deeper divergence emerges. The individual and the collective seem to be moving in opposite directions. For an individual, everyday life has been transformed— how they connect with people, how they shop, how they imagine and present themselves, how they engage with the outside world— have all changed. But at the collective level, there seems to be a return to more tribal impulses. Identities are narrowing, religion is being interpreted more literally, and politics leaves little room for nuance.

In India, time seems to operate on two entirely different clocks. While one is connected with speed, change and the individual, the other measures continuity, legitimacy and order. Technology takes us away from the past, while culture strives to not only keep the structures of the past alive but also uses technology to breathe life into them. If the individual adopts modernity faster than the culture can absorb, it reacts by deepening tradition, legitimising primal impulses and fears, and literalising meaning. The visible world modernises rapidly, but the invisible world holds its shape. India changes constantly, but those changes rearrange rather than replace.

What seems like a contradiction, this division of the self in many ways an extension of an older reality. As many have argued, the Indian sense of self has always been context-sensitive; we behave differently in different contexts without always feeling a need to integrate the self into a coherent whole. Al Ni Srinivas uses the example of a physicist working for NASA, who can insist on getting the horoscope matched for his daughter, and see no need to explain what others might see as a contradiction.

This is why technology feels both empowering and strangely inconsequential. Young people live in worlds their parents could not have imagined. Yet the deeper social logic governing marriage, morality, caste, religion and legitimacy remains remarkably stable. Technology multiplies meaning at the level of the individual; society intensifies existing meanings at the level of the collective.

We may be moving faster than ever, but along a path that circles back to itself. Only the return is more intense, more primal and feeds on what divides us. The future is coming at us rapidly, but on its back it carries an exaggerated version of the past.

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Rhino attack at Assam's Kaziranga National Park kills home guard, injures forest staff

Guwahati: A home guard died and another forest staff member was injured in a rhino attack at Kaziranga National Park on Sunday, a day after a wild buffalo injured forest personnel at Manas National Park, both in Assam, reports **Kangkan Kalita**. The deceased was identified as Sahabuddin and the injured as Ramen Borah. Forest officers said the two were patrolling the park when they were attacked. According to 2022 estimates, Kaziranga had 2,613 one-horned rhinos.

HACK OF THE DAY — BANK TRANSFER FAILED? TRACK AND RECOVER YOUR MONEY

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3. Share UTR, date, amount, sender and beneficiary details.
4. If unresolved after 2-3 working days, escalate via RBI CMS: https://cms.rbi.org.in

NOTE: Most failed transfers are auto-reversed within RBI timelines, but early complaints help speed up recovery.

Hacks are based on verified public sources. Readers are advised to follow official websites & updated rules

Tip from abhishek.nathwal@timesofindia.com

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Rubio: India has committed to stop buying Russian oil

TNN & AGENCIES

Munich: US secretary of state Marco Rubio has said that India has committed to stop buying Russian oil, days after New Delhi reiterated that "national interests" would be the "guiding factor" for energy procurement.

US President Donald Trump, while announcing a trade deal with New Delhi early in Feb, had said India had agreed to not procure crude oil from Russia. Since then, the US has made this claim multiple times.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday, Rubio said, "In our conversations with India, we've gotten their commitment to stop buying additional Russian oil." He was responding to a question on the Russia-Ukraine war and the sanctions imposed on Moscow.

Responding to a question on whether the trade deal with the US would affect energy ties with Russia at the same conference, external affairs minister S Jaishankar had earlier said India remained firmly committed to strategic autonomy "because it's a part of our history and our evolution. It's something which is very deep, and something which cuts across the political spectrum as well."

Marco Rubio was responding to a question on the Ukraine war and the sanctions imposed on Russia

The minister described the global oil market as complex and dynamic. "Oil companies in India, as in Europe, as probably in other parts of the world, look at availability, look at costs, look at risks and take the decisions that they feel are in their best interest," Jaishankar said.

After announcing the deal, Trump had in an executive order rolled back the additional 25% tariffs on India that he imposed in Aug over procurement of crude oil from Russia.

Earlier, India had said that it would maintain multiple sources for crude oil purchases and diversify them to ensure stability in the supply chain, with national interests remaining the "guiding factor" for the procurement, foreign secretary Vikram Misri said this week.

STATISTICS A slice of life in numbers

Caste-wise break up of UGC non-teaching staff

Data shows that the general category accounts for seven in 10 non-teaching staff in colleges. Within the reserved categories, OBCs form the largest share of the overall workforce

Note: Includes group A, B & C; PwBD stands for persons with benchmark disabilities
Source: UGC Annual Report 2023-24

Kerala gives state farewell to baby who gave life to 4

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Arun Abraham & Sherin Ann John bid adieu to their daughter Aalin

Pathanamthitta: Aalin Sherin Abraham's life was painfully brief. She lived only 10 months. Yet the infant achieved something extraordinary — giving life to four others and reshaping Kerala's medical history. Mourners packed Vathunamil House at Nedungadapally village in Pathanamthitta district to bid farewell to the baby who became the youngest organ donor in the state. Jasmine framed the tiny coffin. Silence did the rest. By Sunday evening, thousands lined the route to Nedungadapally St Thomas CSI Church, where the infant was laid to rest with full state honours.

Aalin was the daughter of Arun Abraham and Sherin Ann John. He runs an Akshaya e-governance centre in Mallapally with his father Reji Samuel. She teaches at a private B.Ed college. Together, they made a decision few parents are ever asked to make.

After a road crash in Kottayam on Feb 5, Aalin was treated at a private hospital in Kochi. Doctors declared her brain-dead Friday. Her parents consented to donate her organs. By evening, her liver, both kidneys, corneas and a heart valve were matched and moved. Four recipients — including two children — received a chance to live.

At the church, Reji Samuel spoke to a packed nave. "Yes, there is pain," he said. "But we are blessed by our children's decision. We lost our baby. We gained four children."

Chandran, grandfather of Shreya — one of the kidney recipients — came to the house to pay respects. "I met the angel for the last time," he said. "She gave my granddaughter life. I know the pain this family carries."

By nightfall, candles dimmed. The church bells faded.

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Govt unveils AI governance norms

Seeks To Curb Bias And Misuse Without Hurting Its Adoption

Manash Gohain
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Govt on Sunday unveiled India's first comprehensive AI governance guidelines, choosing a light-touch, principle-based rulebook over a rigid new law to manage the risks of artificial intelligence while keeping innovation on track. The framework seeks to curb bias, misuse and opacity in AI systems without slowing down adoption, signalling India's intent to shape responsible AI governance ahead of the five-day AI Impact Summit 2026, which begins on Monday.

The guidelines lay out how AI should be developed and used across sectors such as healthcare, education, agriculture, finance and governance. Instead of prescribing strict controls, the framework is anchored in seven broad principles, or "sutras", that are meant to guide both policymakers and industry.

These include trust as the foundation, 'people first', innovation over restraint, fairness and equity, accountability, understandable by design, and safety, resilience and sustainability. Together, they emphasise that AI systems must support human decision-making, remain transparent, avoid discrimination and be deployed with clear safeguards.

A key feature of the guidelines is reliance on existing laws. Officials said many AI-related risks are already covered under current legal frameworks such as IT rules, data protection laws, and criminal statutes. Instead of rushing into a standalone AI law, govt has opted for periodic reviews and targeted changes as technology evolves.

The framework also proposes creation of new national institutions to oversee AI governance. These include an AI governance group to coordinate policy across ministries, a technology and policy expert committee to provide expert inputs, and an AI safety institute to focus on testing standards, safety research and risk assessment.

A worker installs flags of participating nations at Bharat Mandapam

The guidelines spell out expectations for AI developers and deployers. They call for transparency reports, clear disclosures when AI-generated content is used, grievance redressal mechanisms for people harmed by AI systems, and cooperation with regulators. High-risk applications, especially those affecting safety, rights or livelihoods, are expected to follow stronger safeguards and human oversight. Officials said the approach reflects India's belief that AI should not remain limited to a few firms or countries, but be widely deployed to solve real-world problems while remaining trustworthy. By prioritising innovation alongside safeguards, govt aims at positioning India not just as a major user of AI, but as a global voice in shaping responsible, inclusive AI governance aligned with the vision of 'Viksit Bharat 2047'.

AI models & campus labs: India's tech push at summit

Manash.Gohain@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: India will launch its first set of sovereign AI models, announce major national AI research programmes, expand shared computing facilities, and roll out AI labs across 500 universities at AI Impact Summit 2026.

Earlier, electronics and IT minister Ashwini Vaishnaw had said home-grown models are ready for public use and will be unveiled at the summit. Trained on Indian datasets, the models are designed to handle the country's linguistic diversity and sector-specific challenges, ranging from governance and healthcare to science and industry.

A key focus of the push is talent creation. Vaishnaw said industry-led AI labs, along with GPUs, models and standardised curriculum, will be introduced in 500 universities to build a large national talent pipeline. Students will get hands-on access to AI infrastructure and real-world use cases, helping bridge the gap between education and industry needs.

Stock image

FOCUS ON TALENT CREATION

The fourth AI Impact Summit will be the largest edition so far and the first to be hosted in the Global South. It is expected to see participation from over 100 countries, and of more than 100 global AI leaders at CEO and CXO level and over 500 experts. The summit aims at delivering at least 10 actionable outcomes, backed by over 500 pre-events held in India and abroad.

Sovereign AI to feature prominently at summit

▸ Continued from P 1

Preliminary discussions point to three big areas — using AI to boost social welfare and bridge the digital divide; safeguarding the environment through sustainable computing; and fostering equitable economic growth with skills training and shared innovation platforms. AI summit's 'seven chakras', or working groups, on health, agriculture, skilling, computing and other sectors, are expected to feed proposals like shared AI commons and compute resources. India is also championing the idea of "sovereign AI", encouraging countries to develop their own foundation models while collaborating on open datasets and interoperable standards. The ministry of external affairs has confirmed that world leaders including French President Emmanuel Macron and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will attend the summit.

LS may take up oppn notice against Speaker on March 9

Times News Network

New Delhi: The opposition's notice for a resolution for Speaker Om Birla's removal is likely to be taken up in Lok Sabha on the first day of the Budget session's second part on March 9, parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju said on Sunday, as the govt looks to get on with its legislative agenda in the sitting after disposing of the move against the chair.

As the BJP-led NDA has 293 members in the 542-member House and is likely to draw support of several fence-sitters, the opposition's bid for Birla's ouster for his alleged partiality looks set to fall through. "On March 9 in Lok Sabha, we will have the debate on the no-confidence motion moved against the Speaker. There will be a vote following the debate," Rijiju told TOI. Official sources said the governing NDA is keen to deal with the issue urgently.

Om Birla to represent India in Bangladesh

New Delhi: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will represent India at the swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected govt of Bangladesh led by Tarique Rahman, chairman of Bangladesh Nationalist Party, in Dhaka on Feb 17. PM Modi will not be travelling as the date and even the time of the swearing-in was clashing with his bilateral meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron in Mumbai. TNN

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Interested bidders may submit EOI within seven days from the date of publication, latest by 23rd Feb, 2026. Those bidders who have submitted EOI will be given an opportunity to visit site and raise queries during the RFP stage prior to submission of Bid.

Please visit tender section at www.gmrpui.com/energy for further details.

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Gangadhar Meher University is seeking applications from Indian citizens having eligibility as per the UGC Notification, New Delhi, dated 4th July 2018, for appointment to the posts of Assistant Professor/ Associate Professor/ Professor against regular sanctioned posts in the mentioned departments: (Anthropology, Biotechnology, Botany, Chemistry, Commerce, Computer Science, Economics, Education, English, Geography, Hindi, History, Library and Information Science, Mathematics, Odia, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Sanskrit, Sociology, Statistics and Zoology) as per the Letter No. 5322/HE, Dated 31.01.2026 of Department of Higher Education, Government of Odisha, Bhubaneswar. The online application form and department-wise reservation details will be made available on the University website www.gmuniversity.ac.in from 28th February 2026 onwards. For details of the terms and conditions, guidelines for applying etc. please visit the University website.

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INVITATION FOR TENDERS (Through KPP Portal Only)

BWSSB invites tenders in Two Stage Tender System from eligible Contractors for the following Works.

Sl. No.	Name of the Works	Amount Put to Tender / EMD Amount
	Office of the Chief Engineer (South), 7th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009.	
	IFT No.: BWSSB/EIC/CE(S)/ACE(S)-1/DCE(M)-1/TA(S)/8015/2025-26	Date: 12-02-2026
1	Work of Providing and Laying 600 mm Dia MS Pipe Line from Subramanyapura Lake to Surbramanyapura Post Office along Gubbalala Main Road coming under PP Layout Service Station of AEESW-5 Sub Division. (Call-2)	Rs. 222.85 Lakhs / Rs. 3.34 Lakhs
	IFT No.: BWSSB/EIC/CE(S)/ACE(S)-1/DCE(M)-1/TA(S)/8016/2025-26	Date: 12-02-2026
2	Work of Providing and Laying 600 mm Dia MS Pipe Line from Anjaneya Temple to Subramanyapura Lake along Gubbalala Main Road coming under PP Layout Service Station of AEESW-5 Sub Division. (Call-2)	Rs. 223.95 Lakhs / Rs. 3.36 Lakhs

For above works, Last Date for Receipt of Tenders: 23-02-2026 upto 15.00 Hours. Tender will be Opened on: 24-02-2026 after 17.00 Hours. Sd/- Chief Engineer (South)

Sl. No.	Name of the Works	Amount Put to Tender / EMD Amount
	Office of the Chief Engineer (Project), 3rd Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009.	
	IFT No.: BWSSB/CE(P)/ACE(Cstr-DCW)/2303/2025-26	Date: 13-02-2026
3	Work of Shifting Water Supply Utilities to Facilitate the BMRCL Construction Works along ORR Package-1 BMRCL Phase-3 J.P. Nagar 4th Phase Metro Station to Mysore Road Project.	Rs. 319.25 Lakhs / Rs. 4.78 Lakhs
	IFT No.: BWSSB/CE(P)/ACE(Cstr-DCW)/2304/2025-26	Date: 13-02-2026
4	Work of Shifting UGD Utilities to Facilitate the BMRCL Construction Works along ORR Package-1 BMRCL Phase-3 J.P. Nagar 4th Phase Metro Station to Mysore Road Project.	Rs. 202.80 Lakhs / Rs. 3.5 Lakhs

For above works, Last Date for Receipt of Tenders: 02-03-2026 upto 16.00 Hours. Tender will be Opened on: 03-03-2026 after 17.00 Hours. Sd/- Chief Engineer (Project)

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-Procurement Process can be obtained by logging on to https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in. For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.

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No: TMTP/F&A/027/E-auction 02/35/2025-26 Date: 12.02.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Tumakuru Machine Tool Park (TMTP), (SPV), intends to invest its surplus funds of Rs. 16.60 Crore in the Fixed Deposit for a period of 181 days with Nationalized / Public Sector Banks. Last date and time for submitting the tender is: 21.02.2026 at 16.00 hours. For more details visit https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in

Sd/- Chief Executive Officer, TMTP

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PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES RELATING TO ANNEX, WARIS, PINCON, PAILAN, RAMEL, KOLKATA WEIR, VIBGYOR, TOWER INFOTECH, GBC INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION, TOGO RETAIL MARKETING, R N POLYMER, TEACHERS WELFARE, BASIL INTERNATIONAL, REAL TULIP INDUSTRIES, MPS GROUP OF COMPANIES

Justice S. P. Talukdar One Man Committee, High Court, Calcutta is going to hold public auction (e-auction) of some properties of Annex Infrastructure India Limited Group of Companies, Waris Group of Companies, Pincon Group of Companies, Pailan Group of Companies, Ramel Industries Limited, Kolkata Weir Industries Limited, Vibgyor Group of Companies, Tower Infotech Group of Companies, GBC Industrial Corporation Group of Companies, Togo Retail Marketing Limited Group of Companies, R N Polymer Industries Limited Group of Companies, Teachers Welfare Credit and Holding Group of Companies, Basil International Group of Companies, Real Tulip Industries Limited Group of Companies and MPS Group of Companies. Interested persons are requested to visit www.justicesptalukdarcommitee.com or 'Auction Notice under Recovery Proceedings' in 'Enforcement' tab on www.sebi.gov.in, or www.adroitvaluation.com for details.

Place: Kolkata
Date: February 16, 2026
CBC 15204/11/0247/2526

Securities and Exchange Board of India (on behalf of Justice S. P. Talukdar One Man Committee)

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I, Urmila, residing at 14, 2nd main Baba Nagar, Bagalur Mn Road, IAF post Yelahanka Bangalore 560063, changed my name to Urmila Singh and date of birth from 06/05/1967 to 10/06/1967 Vide de affidavit no IN-KA[illegible]

I Mohammed Faizan S/O, Mukhtar Ahmad Farooqui R/o 0701, Wing 5T, Sobha Dream Acres Oasis, Balagere, Bengaluru - 560087 have changed my name to Mohammad Faizan Farooqui.

I MAHAMED BASHA K A S/O AMEER SAB K G ,R/O of BENGALURU shall be known as "MUHAMED BASHA K A" affidavit no. IN-KA[illegible]

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HEALTH & WELLNESS

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Hear it out

With the right support and modern assistive devices, hearing loss can be effectively managed, enabling individuals to remain connected and confident in daily life

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Your hearing health depends on many factors, including timely care and simple lifestyle precautions. A person who is unable to hear as well as someone without normal hearing thresholds of 25 dB or better in both ears is said to have hearing loss. It may be mild, moderate, severe, or profound. It can affect one ear or both ears and can lead to difficulty in hearing conversational speech or loud sounds. 'Hard of hearing' refers to people with hearing loss ranging from mild to severe. The causes of hearing loss and deafness can be congenital or acquired.

CONGENITAL CAUSES

Congenital causes may lead to hearing loss being present at or acquired soon after birth. Hearing loss can be caused by hereditary and non-hereditary genetic factors or by certain complications during pregnancy and childbirth, including: maternal rubella, syphilis or certain other infections during pregnancy, low birth weight, birth asphyxia (a lack of oxygen at the time of birth), inappropriate use of particular drugs during pregnancy, such as aminoglycosides, cytotoxic drugs, antimalarial drugs, and diuretics, severe jaundice in the neonatal period, which can damage the hearing nerve in a newborn infant.

ACQUIRED CAUSES

Acquired causes may lead to hearing loss at any age, such as infectious diseases including meningitis, measles and mumps, chronic ear infections, collection of fluid in the ear (otitis media), use of certain medicines, such as those used in the treatment of neonatal infections, malaria, drug-resistant tuberculosis, and cancers, injury to the head or ear, excessive noise, including occupational noise such as that from machinery and explosions, recreational exposure to loud sounds such as that from use of personal audio devices at high volumes and for prolonged periods of time and regular attendance at concerts, nightclubs, bars and sporting events, ageing, in particular due to degeneration of sensory cells, and wax or foreign bodies blocking the ear canal. Among children, chronic otitis media is a common cause of hearing loss.

ACT EARLY

Early detection and intervention are crucial to minimising the impact of hearing loss on a child's development and educational achievements. In infants and young children with hearing loss, early identification and management through infant hearing screening programmes can improve the linguistic and educational outcomes for the child. "As we identified it early, we were able to begin therapy and fit him with hearing aids before his first birthday, giving him the support he needed during critical speech and language development years," says Suparna, mother of a five-year-old boy. People with hearing loss can benefit from the use of hearing devices, such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and other assistive devices. They may also benefit from speech therapy, aural rehabilitation and other related services. As Lakshman, a senior citizen who recently started using hearing aids, shares, "Getting hearing aids was like tuning the sound back on in my life. I can now follow conversations at family gatherings and hear my grandchildren laugh clearly again. It has given me confidence and independence."

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CONTRAPUNTO

Real stupidity beats artificial intelligence every time

– TERRY PRATCHETT, HOGFATHER

Mission AImpossible

India has built an I.I.M. has good startups & upcoming data centres. But that's not enough

Big things happen when people put their heads together. In Feb 1974, a handful of Taiwanese engineers and officials met for a breakfast meeting. Taiwan's economy depended on labour-intensive factories at the time, but the breakfast group saw competition from neighbouring countries ahead. They decided it was time to go high-tech. Four years later, Taiwan was not only making semiconductors, but was also third in terms of digital watch exports. It's Feb again, and world's AI captains, along with armies of delegates, are gathered in Delhi. At *India AI Impact Summit 2026*, there will be many opportunities to put heads together. But what does India want from these meetings?

There's the official manifesto that says AI should develop keeping people, planet and progress first. A laudable aim, but far removed from reality at present. As to people, talk over the past few days has dwelt on the coming jobocalypse – annihilation of entry- and middle-rung white-collar jobs. Regarding planet, AI's water and energy demands are well-documented. Progress under these conditions is questionable. So India cannot realise its vision if all it brings to the table are high moral principles. What it needs is the underpinnings of AI: its own research, data centres, foundational models, and popular applications.

True, US seems to have an unassailable lead in AI today. But so was the case with semiconductors, and rare earths, at various points last century. It gets off the blocks fast with a combination of wealth, cutting-edge research, and first-mover advantage. That doesn't mean the race is over. And AI, especially, is still in its infancy. While US firms hog headlines, India has quietly built BharatGen, its own LLM that supports 22 languages. States like Andhra have drawn multi-billion data centre commitments. IIT Madras has emerged as a cradle of startups, drawing over $2bn in VC investments. But it's time to shift gears now.

As the accompanying article says, GOI and the private sector must invest more in R&D. It doesn't cost as much as the infra buildout, or the long-term operational costs, but is the bedrock of true aspiration. Because AI infra requires tens of billions of dollars, we will need foreign capital, but good projects shouldn't be held up because of funding gaps. Govt must play enabler, sitting down with researchers and industry to spot obstacles, and remove them. Taking care not to entangle them in red tape. We have a vision, let's put heads together to execute it.

No Storm In A Cup

Food research is addictive, but also disorienting. Often common sense is a better guide

Now, another toast to coffee by a study of 130,000 people that suggests that two to three cups a day can protect the brain as it ages, and lower risk of dementia. Square that with a 10-year study published last year of nearly 10,000 women aged 65+ that found that drinking coffee daily could be linked to lower bone mineral density, potentially increasing the risk of osteoporosis. So, was old Bill's real question, then, to drink or not to drink coffee?

As difficult as it is to keep up with the endless stream of food-based research that swings the pendulum from good to bad and back again on whatever food intake is under the microscope, it is way more stressful to be none the wiser about nutrition despite so much research and funding. That, too much of nothing does any good isn't food research but common sense and lived reality. Yet reading about food research is wildly addictive, and spawns industry – oils to spices & nuts, the full organic range, and herbal concoctions minus gin. Food research has defined kitchen shelves, stocked fridges, lined pockets, minted boutique businesses.

Perhaps nothing has been more polarising for our collective cholesterol – good, bad and everything in-between – than ghee. If in 2026, experts are inclined to see god in ghee, it was devil incarnate mere years ago. If one study said it raises LDL, tut-tut, another found it helps metabolism; problematic for gallbladder, but supports gut lining. Close behind ghee is eggs – high protein or bad cholesterol? And soy: hormonal interference or cancer prevention? Artificial sweeteners have as many studies as lobbies for and against. What are we to do? Arguably, we choose to follow research that suits our palate, and ignore those that kill the vibe. For now, let's go with coffee's got cause.

AIyyo Doctor

Friendly family GP has got competition

Anil Abraham

Every time I water the bougainvillea near the compound wall, my next-door neighbour will lean over for some medical advice. But many people who used to visit the friendly family physician for their health issues, have nowadays replaced their GP with ChatGPT: "I have a headache doctor – I'm sure I have cancer. I'm wondering whether I should do an MRI or plan directly for brain surgery?" I dread the day when instead of depending on a doctor for a second opinion after self-diagnosis, patients will do their own surgery after watching a neurosurgeon on YouTube. And I gently suggest to Hypochondriac Harish that he get his eyes checked before making a spectacle of himself. AI in healthcare is like the Indian politician – jumping to conclusions but completely lacking in vision.

AI is making its presence felt in every field and in healthcare it's promising incredible things. Imagine that as soon as the patient sits on a sofa in the doctor's waiting room, the seat will record weight, body fat percentage, and potential need for hip replacement. A visit to the restroom will be even more informative – it will reveal blood sugar, cholesterol, and an untreated infection from the last trip to Bangkok. AI will help you order cheese-burst pizza as you wait and inform the doctor that your diet is contributing to your clogged coronaries. Your X-ray will reveal more than your fractured femur – it will also alert the I-T cell about your stash of cash in Cayman Islands.

But what the patient will find lacking is the human touch – empathy and emotional intelligence. Recognising from non-verbal clues the stress that is causing the backache from a 70-hour week. The friendly neighbourhood doctor hearing the tremor in the voice of an ageing parent and picking up the depression of loneliness and old age. Even though the patient jokes that no one can read the doctor's handwriting, the doctor is reading more than the average patient expresses in words. Like the viral video of Pedestrian Prabhavathi in Kozhikode, we need the doctor to firmly re-direct the patient on to the right path.

If you've already made a diagnosis, then why do you need a doctor, I asked Harish. It's because we need someone to blame when things go wrong – we can't possibly beat up a computer. AIyyo!

TECH SOME RISKS, GOI

For AI sovereignty, investments and safety must necessarily be at the core. Govt needs to take a leap of faith to make this possible

Tanweer Alam

Columnist based in Oxford University

All Things AI

Geopolitical uncertainty triggered by Trumpbas sharply shifted other nations' AI focus from 'safety' to 'sovereignty'. This is more than evident in Delhi's AI summit, where India is pitching for a global leadership role. The shift comes at a time when US-based companies are miles ahead of Europe, and certainly India, on the AI chain – from data capacity design and manufacture, to development of applications. Per Stanford AI Index 2025, US led with 40 notable AI models in 2024, followed by China with 15, and Europe with 3.

If Europe is focused on 'safety' and 'sovereignty' to reduce dependency on American AI companies, India has framed AI in terms of 'impact' and 'sovereignty' but de-emphasised safety, even though there have been warnings about AI since 2022, and Anthropic's research paper on risks of AI rang alarm bells last month. It said AI interactions may be "reducing individuals' ability to form accurate beliefs, make authentic value judgments, and act in line with their own values."

The inaugural AI Safety Summit in 2023 had concluded that AI holds the "potential for serious, even catastrophic, harm, either deliberate or unintentional." But Washington sees questions of safety and accountability of US-based AI systems as "attacks", and has pushed back against Europe's attempts to fix accountability – European Commission fined Musk's X $140mn for alleged regulatory violations, while UK is probing xAI's sexualised imagery.

Meanwhile, New Delhi's approach to AI has been largely reactive. Even the push to develop a homegrown LLM comes after the success of China's DeepSeek that showed an alternative model of AI development.

Unable to compete at the cutting edge, GOI's approach achieves two objectives: 1) a discourse of technological sovereignty that positions India as a player on its own terms; 2) pushing away challenges about safety in a nation as diverse and complex as India, where stakes of AI deployment, particularly in healthcare, finance and surveillance have implications for millions.

India has been a key player in the global software industry and has cultivated a strong services-led tech ecosystem. What's needed is rewards for genuine innovation. Why, despite existing foundational work, has it not built anything concrete in this space?

The numbers tell a sad story: India's R&D spend stood at just 0.7% of GDP in 2024, compared with 2.7% in China and 3.5% in US. The picture is even more disheartening in absolute GDP terms. In the 2026 Budget, GOI cut this year's allocation to ₹1k cr from ₹2k cr, after India AI Mission reportedly used only ₹300cr. India's private investment in R&D also remains low compared with China, Japan, or US. Huawei alone spent nearly $21bn on R&D in 2025, more than India's combined public and private spending.

So, GOI must take a leap of faith to connect risk-taking research to commercial applications. It must also drop the assumption that India's vast population creates ample data to train AI models. When most healthcare and employment are informal, they do not generate usable datasets. So, India struggles with data quality, integrity and interoperability. AI in healthcare depends on reliable health records, but India's system lacks both comprehensive patient data and accurate information on healthcare providers – inputs needed to train AI models.

Even basics like the number and distributions of hospital beds and health workers are inaccurate. And while public health programmes collect vast data, often at high cost and sometimes at the expense of service delivery, this data rarely guides decisions.

Limited usable data, compute capacity, talent shortages and absence of an effective AI regulatory framework are structural limitations in India's AI ecosystem. That's why India ranks 72nd among 174 nations on IMF's AI Index.

At the Summit, India must place safety at the centre of its AI agenda. Because, left unchecked, AI can amplify bias, entrench discrimination, compromise safety, erode rights and exploit systemic vulnerabilities.

While GOI wants voluntary commitments, even though they haven't worked in sectors like medical and finance, the Economic Survey makes a case for an AI Economic Council to "calibrate the pace of AI adoption", and "light, incentive-based, and risk-weighted" governance approach.

An effective risk assessment framework would show which risks are addressed. Its scope should include labour displacement, environmental costs, democratic accountability and cultural impacts. India should also use the Summit to push for institutional tools such as an incident reporting system and a public database of AI harms.

Structural challenges must be made a priority if, at all, the concept of 'sovereign' AI is to have legs. 'Sovereignty' allows national pride to take centrestage in domestic politics, while its ambiguous interpretation enables flexible understanding of national interest that facilitates transactional foreign policy.

GOI should instead offer a roadmap to retain and attract top talent by building ecosystems that better support and fund technological innovation. An AI summit hosted by a Global South country with reasonable negotiating abilities can use this opportunity to reframe geopolitical conversation around AI, but only if focus shifts from performative sovereignty to substantive investment in research, talent and infra that true technological leadership demands, with safety being the guiding science.

The writer is a tech researcher

Memo To Bezos: Share The Pain, Share The Post

Revive Washington Post, don't kill it, begin by giving employees stake in ownership

Michael Pierson

A sign outside Washington Post HQ read: Democracy Dies with Billionaires. It echoed the paper's own motto and captured a new discomfort – one of America's most storied newsrooms now lives at the mercy of a single balance sheet and a single temperament.

When Jeff Bezos bought the Post in 2013, his early message was pragmatic: you cannot shrink your way to relevance.

And yet, last week, the Post shrank. The scale and symbolism of the cuts felt like a great institution amputating its own limbs and calling it preventive care. Days later, the publisher resigned. Proof that the crisis is also about trust and leadership.

But can the Post preserve its mission without pretending the business model will magically repair itself?

Here's a pragmatic proposal: Bezos should create an employee trust and transfer, say, 25% of the Post's ownership into it. This will be an incentive-aligned, governance-aware structure. Employees will have skin in the game. Bezos will retain control.

If employees are asked to absorb pain – through salary freezes, benefit trims, reskilling, redesign or buyouts – sense of that pain should convert into stake.

Why would Bezos do this? Because his problem is not just financial loss but legitimacy loss. The Post's most valuable asset is the trust premium embedded in its name. So, an employee trust is reputational collateral.

What might it's employee trust look like?

Step one: Transfer 25% of equity into a perpetual trust for all employees – journalists, technologists, product and commercial teams.

Step two: Offer a structured salary-to-equity programme for 36-48 months. Employees can voluntarily take a pay cut, including variable pay, and the forgone amount converts into equity units within the trust, at a valuation fixed upfront by an independent process.

Shares vest over time. Employees who leave retain their holdings. Liquidity comes through a future listing event. The goal is alignment, not gambling.

Valuation in a private company is messy. So make it boring. Use a conservative third-party method. Make the number binding. Disclose the logic internally and freeze it for the programme's duration. Prevent valuation from becoming another endless argument.

Step three: Make the structure progressive. Exempt the lowest-paid employees. Ask more from executives and senior stars whose compensation already reflects a premium. Shared sacrifice works only when it feels fair.

Step four: Attach governance, not just economics. The employee trust should hold one or two board seats alongside independent trustees. Its role is not to interfere in daily editorial choices but to hold leadership accountable on strategy, investment and culture. Bezos keeps control; employees gain voice and share responsibility for the P&L.

Step five: Make the editorial firewall sacred. The trust must not vote on story selection or opinion columns. The Guardian's Scott Trust demonstrates how ownership can shield editorial mission from shareholder pressure.

Subscriptions lost amid perceptions of owner interference are part of the Post's business problem. Many readers felt shortchanged by what they saw as abdication of editorial responsibility, including decisions around endorsements and opinion columns. So, the firewall protecting editorial independence must be explicit and guaranteed.

What would such a trust achieve?

- First, it converts "cuts done to us" into "changes designed with us." People endure hardship when sacrifice feels fair and the future shared; they disengage when treated as line items.
- Second, it creates direct incentive to rebuild subscription value, product innovation and operational efficiency. Success would show up in ownership outcomes. When the P&L recovers and the Post wins, employees should win more than applause.
- Third, it creates speed. AI and platform volatility punish slow organisations. Every industry is being forced to rationalise costs, pivot strategy and upgrade skills simultaneously. That is hard enough without a trust deficit between owners and employees. Partial ownership reduces friction and accelerates reinvention.

The obvious objection is that employee ownership is what companies attempt when they are bankrupt. But the Post sits in an uncomfortable middle zone – too important to treat as a hobby, too weakened to assume recovery, too politically exposed to pretend ownership is neutral. The post-layoff backlash showed that public outrage is about fear that a great institution can be diminished by a single owner's shifting priorities.

Will this guarantee revival? No. The Post still needs a coherent editorial strategy – what it will uniquely own; a serious product strategy – what audiences will habitually pay for; and commercial imagination that does not confuse engagement with impact. Metrics matter, but they are mirrors, not maps.

Yet trust is the precondition for all of it. Without trust, you get compliance. With trust, you might get commitment. In journalism, commitment is the only renewable energy source.

If Bezos wants to be remembered as a steward rather than a demolition man, he should do something both modern and old-fashioned: share ownership, share pain, and when the Post regains its footing, share the upside. Share the Post.

Calvin & Hobbes

Sacred*space*

When I run after what I think I want, my days are a furnace of stress and anxiety; if I sit in my own place of patience, what I need flows to me, and without pain. From this I understand that what I want also wants me...

Shams-i Tabrizi

Your Valentine: After The Week Of Love

Partha Sinha

The week of love has just slipped past us. Roses have begun to wilt, dinner reservations have returned to their weekday anonymity, and the language of affection has retreated from timelines and shop windows. The seven-day procession of roses, proposals, chocolates and promises has quietly folded back into ordinary life. This is usually where Valentine's Day ends. Perhaps this is where its meaning begins.

Once the performance fades, a quieter question remains. What exactly did we celebrate?

The origins of the day suggest something far gentler and braver than the choreography we have grown used to. In the third century, Rome saw love as a logistical problem. Emperor Claudius II believed unmarried men made better soldiers. Marriage created attachment. Attachment created hesitation. Hesitation weakened empire. Love, in this logic, interfered with efficiency. Marriage was discouraged and perhaps even forbidden.

Valentine continued to perform weddings in secret. He did not lead protests or write manifestos. He simply protected the human instinct to belong to another person. For this quiet defiance, he was imprisoned and executed on Feb 14.

Before his death, legend says he signed a note to the jailer's daughter with the words, *From your Valentine.* Civilisations are shaped by small sentences that survive time. These two words endured because they carry the philosophical heart of the day: Not just Valentine. Your Valentine.

The movement from abstraction to belonging changes everything. Love in poetry is universal. Love in philosophy is expansive. Love becomes transformative only when it becomes particular. When it moves from humanity to one human being. The Upanishads speak of the journey from the vast to the intimate, from Brahmn to Atman. Meaning is completed in the inward turn.

To call someone yours is not possession. It is participation. It is the acceptance of a quiet responsibility. It is the willingness to witness another life closely enough that their joys and sorrows begin to echo within you. In loving one person deeply, we begin to understand humanity more fully.

Valentine's defiance was therefore philosophical. He protected the right of human beings to choose connection over conformity. Love became an act of freedom.

History, however, enjoys irony. The martyrdom of a man who protected quiet commitment has evolved into a global choreography of affection. Roses follow pricing cycles. Restaurants follow reservation grids. Love arrives pre-packaged in curated gestures.

THE SPEAKING TREE

Commerce gathers wherever emotion gathers. This is neither surprising nor entirely cynical. Markets recognise what we value and attempt to give it form. Commerce multiplies gestures while philosophy deepens them.

Choice sits at the centre of love. It is repeated, ordinary, and deeply sacred. To choose someone daily is to resist disposability. To remain curious about a familiar soul. To keep discovering what routine threatens to hide. In a world of endless options, commitment begins to look like rebellion. In a culture of performance, quiet loyalty becomes radical. In a time devoted to self-expression, deep attention begins to feel sacred.

Now that the week of celebration has passed, the invitation feels clearer. Not to celebrate love, but to practise it. Not to announce it, but to sustain it. The philosophy of Valentine's Day hides in a single word. Love becomes real the moment it becomes yours.

CLOSE WATCH

New scans show NWA 7034 (Black Beauty), a Martian meteorite discovered in 2011, holds more ancient water than thought, strengthening evidence Mars was once wet & possibly habitable

SCIENCE OF THE TIMES

QUICK QUIZ

On Jan 29, 1928, a Scottish engineer publicly demonstrated the Televisor, proving for the first time that moving images could be transmitted & viewed remotely, laying the foundations for modern television technology. What was his name? Send answers to **scienceofthetimes@timesofindia.com**

Breakthroughs From Around The World

VAST, MYSTERIOUS CLOUD HINTS AT HIDDEN STAR

Astronomers have spotted a vast cloud of vaporised metal that briefly dimmed a nearby sun-like star, raising the possibility of a hidden planet or companion star. According to a study published in 'The Astronomical Journal', the cloud blocked most of the light from JD95-4612 for nearly nine months in 2024-25. Using Chile-based telescopes, researchers ruled out planets or asteroids and concluded the object was a dense, metal-rich gas cloud likely formed by a massive collision. "Stars like the sun don't just stop shining for no reason," said lead author Nadia Zakamska. The system will be observed again when the cloud returns decades later.

NEW ELECTRODE TURNS CO2 INTO FORMIC ACID

Scientists have developed a new electrode that can capture carbon dioxide from exhaust gases and convert it directly into a useful chemical, formic acid. Reporting in 'ACS Energy Letters', the team says the system combines carbon capture and conversion in a single step, working efficiently under realistic conditions such as flue gas and even ambient air. Tests showed the electrode outperformed existing technologies, especially at low CO2 concentrations. "This work shows that carbon capture and conversion do not need to be treated as separate steps," said study co-author Wonyong Choi, calling it a simpler route for practical carbon reuse in homes, factories, etc. Researchers say the approach could lower costs, scale faster, and help cut emissions worldwide significantly.

Internet Is Getting Remade For AI. What Does It Mean For You?

Chandrima.Banerjee
@timesofindia.com

Less than half the people on the internet are "people" — only about 44% of online traffic came from humans in 2025 — but even within the traffic driven by relentless bots "using" the internet, a small but significant share of 4% belongs to AI bots.

If that share keeps growing (and it's really likely that it will because of how much AI companies are pouring into agentic AI), most websites will eventually be built for AI and not us. Not in the conspiracy-heavy "dead internet theory" way but in the coded-structures-each-and-science way.

THE WEB IS NOT BUILT TO MAKE THINGS EASY FOR AI ... YET

When an AI browser was launched a while ago, I was testing the agentic mode (in which AI takes over your browser to "do" all the work). I wanted it to find available slots for driving licence renewal. But when I checked back after a few minutes, I found that the agent was stuck. The page had a huge popup covering nearly the entire window, and the AI didn't know what it was supposed to do. The buttons and menus it needed to access were behind the popup — but how would it get to them?

To us, it seems easy enough. Shut the popup, and move on. But behind the scenes, a click is a series of tiny tasks — hover, pointer move, mouse down, mouse up, the click itself. Websites can react to any of these steps, or only if these steps happen in the right order. An AI agent has to do all that, in the correct sequence, and with the right timing. If the page happens to shift mid-click — like when a popup appears — the click can miss or just do nothing.

Also, for AI, the decision to close the popup or interact with it has to be based on some kind of logic. Does it know what's behind the popup? What if engaging with the popup is an important step? What if the popup is the next step?

This kind of logic is easier for AI to navigate if the website has an API that AI agents can use. (An API, Application Programming Interface, is a set of rules and definitions that software components use to talk to each other.) When an AI agent uses an API to get your work done, it doesn't have to bypass all the garrulous persuasion that populates most websites today. Instead of navigating pages built with visual and contextual cues meant for human eyes, it can ask the site directly what it needs — like "show me the available slots" — and get back a clean, structured answer on which it can act for you.

A survey of developers in 2025 found that 26% are already designing APIs for AI agents. But every API is different, with its own little quirks. And an AI agent can't possibly learn every one of them.

So, Anthropic came up with Model Context Protocol, an open protocol for AI agents to coordinate their conversations with services and sites and apps. It's now the frontrunner for becoming the "USB-C port for AI applications".

The 'click' is fading away

About **60%** of searches end without the person ever reaching a destination site — they simply get their answers on the search page without a click, research by the consulting firm Bain & Company found. But searches at least provide a list of pages that might have the answer.

AI would whittle it down even more. Bain's survey also found that about 80% of search users rely on AI summaries at least 40% of the time. And a Pew Research Center analysis found that only 1% of users who came across AI summaries clicked on the links inside AI summaries.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AI IS THE AUDIENCE?

Deloitte estimates that AI platforms drive 6.5% of organic traffic already, and it's expected to go up to 14.5% within a year. As this happens, AI will be "prioritizing semantic richness over keywords, author expertise over backlinks, and being cited in AI responses over page views."

In plain words, there'll be less room for froth. More and more "research" already happens inside AI summaries and chats, and they don't lead to clicks.

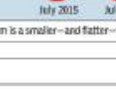
Also, as Parag Agrawal, former Twitter CEO and now the founder of AI startup Parallel Web Systems, told *The Economist*, the web was built for humans to read at human speed — "agents face no such limits". Which means that, over time, we will need more useful information online, certainly not less.

But the way things stand now, there is a mismatch between what AI takes and what it gives back to those putting out that information. Over the past year, for every visit OpenAI sent to a website, its bots crawled about 1,100 pages. For Anthropic, the ratio was one visit for about 58,500 webpages crawled.

If users don't click on pages, the goal for anyone with a website becomes being cited, summarised, or used as a canonical source. And money will be made from each crawl instead of each view. Cloudflare has already begun a pay-per-crawl marketplace that lets site owners allow, block, or charge AI crawlers per request. So, more information does not always survive. Which, in a roundabout way, might just restore the internet to what it was supposed to be — a place with actual answers.

AI-first internet will be more information-dense — which means more data downloaded per page

Weight of the median mobile home page



Polar Bears Are Thriving Despite Loss Of Sea Ice

Bears in Svalbard, Norway, have been spotted chasing down reindeer

As sea ice disappears in Norway's Svalbard archipelago, the fastest warming place on Earth, polar bears have been getting fatter — but scientists don't expect it to last.

The northern Barents Sea, which stretches between Svalbard and Russia's Novaya Zemlya in the Arctic Ocean, has been heating up seven times faster than the globe as a whole.

The sea ice around Svalbard lasts two months less in winter and spring than it did two decades ago. Bears now have to swim 200 to 300 kilometres between hunting grounds on the ice and snow dens on the islands where they give birth.

But the average size and weight of the Svalbard bears have increased since 2000.

"We should think about this as good news for Svalbard," says Jon Aars at the Norwegian Polar Institute.

Polars bears are split into 20 populations across the far north. While numbers are declining in parts of Alaska, Canada and Greenland, the Barents Sea population is thought to be stable or perhaps even growing.

Starting in 1965, Aars and his colleagues tranquilised 770 bears with dart guns, then measured their length and, to estimate weight, their girth at the chest. Trend analysis showed this body condition decreased until 2000, then increased until the end of observations in 2019.

In the spring, when ringed seals give birth to pups on the sea ice, polar bears hunt them to build up stores of fat for the ice-free months. Aars and his colleagues believe the shrinking ice area may be making these seals easier to find.

The approximately 250 bears that remain on the islands when the ice recedes may be hunting more harbour seals, which are spreading to Svalbard as the climate warms.

These "local bears" are ransacking duck and geese colonies for eggs, and have also been seen chasing down reindeer from a growing population.

However, "it will be very difficult to support a reasonable population of polar bears if sea ice disappears," says Jouke Prop at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands.

"There will be a threshold, and... polar bears in Svalbard will be negatively affected by continued sea ice loss," says Aars.

(Alec Luhn, New Scientist, 2026, distributed by Tribune Content Agency)

LAST WEEK'S QUICK QUIZ **Question on Feb 2:** Recent ultra-precise radio tracking data from NASA's Juno spacecraft show that one of the planets in our solar system is a smaller—and flatter—than we originally estimated. Which planet is this? **Answer:** Jupiter

TIMES NATION

Tipu-Shivaji row: 8 hurt in Pune stone pelting

Gitesh Shelke & Vaibhav Gunjapure | TNN

Pune/Nagpur: Eight people were injured on Sunday in stone pelting during BJP protests in front of Congress Bhawan in Pune as Maharashtra Congress chief Harshwardhan Sapkal's remarks allegedly "equating" Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj with Tipu Sultan escalated, setting off demonstrations across the state and drawing in politicians from neighbouring Telangana.

Maharashtra revenue minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule of BJP urged Congress's LS leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi to "seek an explanation from Sapkal and demand his resignation without delay", calling the alleged comparison an affront to Shivaji's legacy. "Such remarks are an insult," Bawankule said, adding silence from Congress would signal approval.

Congress has not issued an official clarification on the issue so far. Party sources indicated that internal discussions were under way.

Lawrence gang likely hiding in Portugal & Pak

Mumbai: Pune resident Subham Lonkar, a key associate of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang who allegedly masterminded the firing at filmmaker Rohit Shetty's Juhu bungalow, is believed to be holed up in Portugal while Zeeshan Akhtar, another Bishnoi gang member who allegedly played a key role in the murder of NCP leader Baba Siddique in 2024, is apparently under protection in Pakistan, police sources said.

Akhtar has reportedly been given shelter by gangster Harwinder Singh alias Rinda who has been linked to terror attacks in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, reports **Ahmed Ali**.

Police are examining the role of 'overseas handlers' Harry Boxer and Arzoo Bishnoi who allegedly guide shooters.

PM: Trade deals part of global integration

'Will Ensure Supply Chains & Mkt Access'

▶ Continued from page 1

The entire nation is proud of the courage shown by our armed forces during Operation Sindoor. During the operation, one could see the benefits of the reforms we have undertaken in the last decade. Therefore, defence budgets, modernisation, etc, all these are parts of our continuous effort and need not be linked to any particular issue. Yes, the reality is that our nation has to be strong and be prepared at all times, and that is what we are doing," PM Modi said.

Asked about the recent trade agreements, the PM said that they have been part of India's global integration with the world, which has picked pace in recent times. Asserting that the recent deals — from the UK to the EU — have been in the pipeline for years and will help Indian producers diversify their markets besides opening opportunities for service professionals.

"These trade agreements are significant not merely because of tariff reductions but because of supply-chain integration and market access in advanced economies. They gradually liberalise manufacturing tariffs, deepen services integration and create new avenues for labour-intensive exports such as textiles, footwear, electronics and engineering goods. In that sense, they support long-term investment," he said.

Asked about the Budget's emphasis on women, PM said welfare of women guided every govt decision. "...It is a matter of national pride that our finance minister, Nirmala Ji has presented the Budget nine consecutive times, which is a record and a matter of pride in itself. Several women across India feel inspired by this," he said.

While listing out several initiatives in the Budget, the PM made special reference to the announcement related to hostels. "Many girls drop out not because of a lack of talent, but because commuting long distances to labs and late-study hours are difficult. This intervention directly addresses that constraint."

Further, Modi said, the steps related to training of Allied Health Professionals, which will benefit women. "Women have always been at the centre of caregiving, but this is largely in the informal sector. By training 1.5 lakh caregivers next year and expanding institutions for Allied Health Professionals, with a target of 1 lakh trained over 5 years, we are embarking on a large-scale effort to formalise care work. This does two things: it creates dignified, certified employment for women and simultaneously strengthens India's healthcare capacity."

Asked about the recent trade agreements, PM Narendra Modi said they have been part of India's global integration with the world, which has picked pace in recent times. He asserted that the recent deals — from the UK to the EU — have been in the pipeline for years and will help Indian producers diversify their markets besides opening opportunities for service professionals

Op Sindoor showed Shiva's Rudra resolve: Rajnath Singh

Coimbatore: Operation Sindoor reflected a Rudra-like resolve of Lord Shiva, defence minister **Rajnath Singh** said on Sunday, while using the example to emphasise that societies governed by fear cannot remain secure and only a fearless people can build a strong nation.

Addressing the 32nd Maheshvaranji celebrations at Isha Yoga Centre, Singh framed fearlessness as a spiritual strength rather than a product of brute force. "Real security," he said, "comes from inner confidence and national consciousness, not only from material capability."

Invoking Lord Shiva as a symbol of protection and destruction, Singh drew a parallel with the armed forces, which he described as blending patience and compassion with decisive strength. TNN

Clash between 2 groups leaves Amroha tense

Harveer Dabas | TNN

Bijnor: Tension gripped Amroha's Kotwali area on Saturday night after a group of men allegedly pelted stones on pilgrims singing bhajans and dancing to DJ music near Chhebra Iypass Shiva temple. Five people, including a police constable, were injured.

Police resorted to lathicharge to disperse the mob and maintain law and order. Constable Shoaib Raza Khan suffered a head injury, while devotees Vidya Devi, Chandrashekhar, Shikhar and another man were injured in the clash. The injured were admitted to a nearby hospital.

Angry people gathered at the police station demanding arrests of the culprits.

'Lessons for us': US Admiral lauds tactical execution of Op Sindoor

Surendra.Singh
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New Delhi: US commander of Indo-Pacific Command **Admiral Samuel J Paparo**, during his India visit on Sunday, "applauded the tactical execution" of the Indian military operations against Pakistan during Operation Sindoor and said both India and the US have "lessons to learn" from the conflict.

He said the US-India defence relationship is on a "steeply upward trajectory", even as he flagged concerns about increasing "coercion" and "aggression" in the Indo-Pacific region.

In reply to a **TOI** query about his views on Op Sindoor, the US commander said, "First of all, I have tremendous reverence for the terrible event (Pahalgam terror attack) that preceded the crisis. In my discussion with my partners, I applaud the tactical execution (of operations). We also sincerely applaud the restraint that was exhibited." Admiral Paparo also said that he has seen a deep commitment from Indian military to learn lessons from this conflict. Asked what lessons the US took away from Op Sindoor which saw Chinese weapons being used by Pakistan, Admiral Paparo said, "Complex long-range weapons have complex long- range kill chains". With the "combination of sensors, communication, propulsion, warheads, seekers in the 21st century, geography is no longer a commodity..."

On China's increasing military might, the Admiral, who is responsible for all US military operations in the region, said, "Deterrence is our highest duty. It is my job to think through the worst-case scenario and to be prepared for that. India shares some of these concerns in the Indo-Pacific, as the region is home to 60% of the world's population, more than 60% of the world's GDP and seven of the world's largest militaries."

"We deal with those concerns with the growing partnerships... mutually respectful, sovereign relationship between the world's oldest democracy and the world's largest democracy," he said.

Most fatalities from jumbo attacks are in Odisha: Study

Riyan.Ramnath
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Bhubaneswar: Odisha sees the highest number of human fatalities in elephant attacks in the country, with 17 people killed per 100 elephants, according to data collated by NGO Wildlife Society of Odisha from a Wildlife Institute of India (WII) census last year.

The figure is substantially higher than those of other states like Karnataka and Kerala, which have more elephants and reported one human death per 100 jumbos. The report puts Karnataka and Kerala elephant numbers at 6,013 and 2,385, respectively, compared with Odisha's 912.

"Assuming the WII DNA-based figure is accurate, Odisha reports a very high rate of human deaths compared to its elephant population. Many believe the WII study invariably shows a lower population trend. But in that case too, Karnataka's 6,000-plus elephant population and human deaths give a much lower casualty ratio," Biswajit Mohanty, a wildlife conservationist, said.

According to Mohanty, even if Odisha's own elephant census figure (3,500) is assumed to be accurate, the number of human deaths per 100 elephants comes to seven — still high compared with other states. Conservationists say the forest department usually blames open defecation by villagers as the major reason for rising elephant attacks.

People in the know said Odisha govt paid Rs 3.7 crore to a private consultant in 2016 for a wildlife conflict mitigation plan, but nothing had materialised yet. Human fatalities rose sharply, from 19 in 2019-20 to 171 in 2024-25. "Elephant movement in corridors is severely affected as they have been degraded by quarrying and development work," Mohanty said.

Domestic priorities come first: Kabir

▶ Continued from page 1

On Nov 26, 2025, India said it was examining a request by Bangladesh's interim govt to extradite Hasina and asserted that it is committed to ensure the best interests of the people of that country. Shortly after BNP's win, the party's standing committee member Salahuddin Ahmed had said BNP will formally urge India to extradite Hasina stand trial.

Kabir highlighted the recent cordial phone call between PM Modi and Rahman, where Modi extended an invitation for Rahman to visit India at a convenient time. On the timing of such a visit, Kabir said domestic priorities come first. "Tarique Rahman will focus on settling the country on a path of prosperity and economic security. Once things stabilise here, he will take up international engagements, including the visit to India." TOI

TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2026

IF YOU CAN'T BE A GOOD EXAMPLE, YOU'LL HAVE TO BE A HORRIBLE WARNING
— CATHERINE AIRD

RIHANNA CONTINUES TO FUEL WEDDING RUMOURS WITH VALENTINE'S DAY DINNER WITH A$AP ROCKY

RUPERT GRINT BECOMES LATEST CELEB TO BE ASKED TO SPEAK ON RISE OF FASCISM: 'OBVIOUSLY, I'M AGAINST IT'

In China's mountains, nuke revival takes shape

Satellite Imagery Of Secretive Facilities Reveals Beijing's Endeavours To Expand Its N-Arsenal

Chris Buckley & Agnes Chang

In the lush, misty valleys of southwest China, satellite imagery reveals the country's accelerating nuclear build-up, a force designed for a new age of superpower rivalry. One such valley is known as Zitong, in Sichuan Province, where engineers have been building new bunkers and ramparts. A new complex bristles with pipes, suggesting the facility handles highly hazardous materials.

Another valley is home to a double-fenced facility known as Pingtong, where experts believe China is making plutonium-packed cores of nuclear warheads. The main structure has been refurbished in recent years with new vents and heat dispersers. More construction is under way next to it.

Above the Pingtong facility entrance, a hallmark exhortation of China's leader, Xi Jinping, appears in characters so large they are visible from space: "Stay true to the founding cause and always remember our mission." These are among several secretive nuclear-related facilities in Sichuan Province that have expanded and undergone upgrades in recent years.

China's build-up complicates efforts to revive global arms controls after the expiration of the final remaining nuclear arms treaty between the US and Russia. Washington argues that any successor agreements must also bind China, but Beijing has shown no interest. "The changes we see on the ground at these sites align with China's broader goals of becoming a global superpower. Nuclear weapons are an integral part of that," said Renny Babiarz, a geospatial intelligence expert who has analysed satellite images and other visual evidence of the sites and shared his findings with NYT.

Getty Images/iStockphoto/Photo for representation

China's build-up complicates efforts to revive global arms controls after the expiration of the final remaining nuclear arms treaty between the US & Russia

He likened each nuclear location across China to a piece of a mosaic that, seen as a whole, shows a pattern of rapid growth. "There's been evolution at all of these sites, but broadly speaking, that change accelerated starting from 2019," he noted.

China had more than 600 nuclear warheads by the end of 2024 and is on a track to have 1,000 by 2030, according to the Pentagon's latest annual estimate. China's stockpile is much smaller than the many thousands held by the US and Russia, but its growth is still troublesome, said Matthew Sharp, a former US state department official.

The sites in Sichuan were built six decades ago as part of Mao Zedong's "Third Front," a project to shield China's nuclear weapons production labs and plants from strikes by the US or the Soviet Union. When China's tensions with Washington and Moscow subsided in the 1980s, many "Third Front" nuclear facilities closed or shrank. Sites like Pingtong and Zitong continued operating, but change in the years that followed was piecemeal, reflecting China's policy then of keeping a relatively small nuclear arsenal, said Babiarz.

That era of restraint faded from about seven years ago. The design of the Pingtong complex suggests that it is being used to make the pits of nuclear warheads — the metal core, usually containing plutonium — according to Babiarz. In Zitong, the new bunkers and ramparts are likely being used to test "high explosives," experts say, referring to the chemical compounds that detonate to create the conditions for a chain reaction in nuclear materials. "You have a layer of high explosives and the shock wave at the same time implodes into the centre. This needs blast tests to perfect them," said Hui Zhang, a physicist who researches China's nuclear programs at Harvard University, who examined Babiarz's findings.

The complex includes an oval area about the size of 10 basketball courts. The objective of these upgrades remains a subject of debate. Zhang said satellite imagery alone offers limited information.

China wants to be "in the position where they believe they're immune from nuclear coercion by the US," said Michael S Chase, a former US deputy assistant secretary of defence for China. "I think they probably judge that could come into play in a conventional conflict over Taiwan." NYT

Iranian official hints at N-compromise if US lifts sanctions

Potential Energy, Mining, Aircraft Deals On Table

Getty Images

Trump told Israeli PM Netanyahu in Dec that he would support Israeli strikes on Tehran's ballistic missile programme if the US and Iran could not reach a deal, CBS News reported on Sunday, citing two sources familiar with the matter

Iran is pursuing a nuclear agreement with the US that delivers economic benefits for both sides, an Iranian diplomat was reported as saying on Sunday, days before a second round of talks between Tehran and Washington.

Iran and the US renewed negotiations earlier this month to tackle their decades-long dispute over Tehran's nuclear programme and avert a new military confrontation. The US has dispatched a second aircraft carrier to the region and is preparing for the possibility of a sustained military campaign if the talks do not succeed, US officials have said.

"For the sake of an agreement's durability, it is essential that the US also benefits in areas with high and quick economic returns," foreign ministry deputy director for economic diplomacy Hamid Ghanbari said, according to the semi-official Fars news agency.

Iran has threatened retaliation against any US attack but the official struck a conciliatory note on Sunday. "Common interests in the oil and gas fields, joint fields, mining investments, and even aircraft purchases are included in the negotiations," Ghanbari said, arguing that the 2015 nuclear pact with world powers had not secured US economic interests.

US secretary of state Marco Rubio, speaking at a news conference in Bratislava, said President Donald Trump had made it clear that he would prefer diplomacy and a negotiated settlement. "No one's ever been able to do a successful deal with Iran but we're going to try," Rubio said.

On Friday, a source said that a US delegation including envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner would meet Iranian officials in Geneva on Tuesday, a meeting later confirmed by a senior Iranian official on Sunday. "Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner will be travelling, I think they are travelling right now, to have important meetings and we'll see how that turns out," Rubio said, without giving any details.

Iran's deputy foreign minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi, meanwhile, signalled Tehran's readiness to compromise on its nuclear programme in return for sanctions relief, telling the BBC on Sunday that the ball was "in America's court to prove that they want to do a deal."

The senior official referred to the Iranian atomic chief's statement on Monday that the country could agree to dilute its most highly enriched uranium in exchange for the lifting of sanctions as an example of Iran's flexibility. However, he reiterated that Tehran would not accept zero uranium enrichment, a key sticking point in past negotiations, with Washington viewing enrichment inside Iran as a potential pathway to nuclear weapons. Iran denies seeking such weapons. REUTERS

Iran FM heads to Geneva for talks with US: Ministry

Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi headed to Switzerland on Sunday for the second round of renewed nuclear talks with the US later this week, his ministry said. Araghchi "left Tehran for Geneva late Sunday heading a diplomatic and technical delegation to conduct the second round of nuclear talks and hold a number of diplomatic consultations," the ministry said. "Indirect Iran-US nuclear talks will be held on Tuesday with the mediation and good offices of Oman." AFP

Imran Khan is examined by docs in jail, his party rejects inspection

Islamabad: Pakistan's jailed former prime minister **Imran Khan** was on Sunday examined by a team of doctors after a reported eyesight issue while his party rejected the inspection. A Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawyer visited Khan on Thursday on the directive of the Supreme Court to get a first-hand report on his living conditions. The report showed that Khan complained of losing about 85 per cent vision in his right eye.

Sources said that a team of doctors visited Khan and examined the affected eye in detail. "The medical examination went on for an hour and the team left after collecting blood samples," sources said.

His party refused to accept the latest inspection, saying that without the presence of the PTI, his family and Khan's personal doctors, govt's stance was "deemed malicious".

"Govt's claim that a message was sent to the party leadership to arrive at the jail at the time of the examination is, in fact, a crude attempt to divert attention from the core issue," his party said in a post on X. PTI

Tarique meets Jamaat chief, student party leader

Dhaka: BNP chief Tarique Rahman on Sunday met Jamaat-e-Islami chief Shafiqur Rahman and National Citizen Party leader Nahid Islam as part of a "positive political beginning," two days before his party is set to form govt in Bangladesh.

Led by Tarique Rahman, the BNP swept to power with a two-thirds majority with 49.9% votes and 209 seats in the Thursday's polls, results for which were declared on Friday. The Jamaat-e-Islami, which was opposed to the country's 1971 independence from Pakistan, registered its best ever performance with 31.7% votes and 68 seats. The NCP secured the third-highest number of seats, six, and 3% votes.

"Following the historic landslide victory in the 13th National Parliamentary Election, BNP chairman Tarique Rahman today paid a courtesy visit to the Ameer of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, Shafiqur Rahman, at his residence," the BNP posted on X.

PTI

'POSITIVE BEGINNING': BNP chairman Tarique Rahman (R) meets Jamaat-e-Islami chief Shafiqur Rahman in Dhaka on Sunday

Congratulating the BNP chief "on his election as the incoming PM of Bangladesh," the Jamaat said his visit "marks an important moment in our national political journey."

Stating that the Jamaat welcomes "this engagement in a spirit of dialogue and responsibility," the party said in a post on X that it hopes it signals "a new chapter of institutional maturity and mutual respect." "In our discussions, he (Tarique Rahman) reaffirmed that steps are being taken regarding incidents of post-election violence, including actions to address harm against opposition supporters and minority communities," the post said. "We will cooperate fully on matters of national interest, yet we will discharge our constitutional duty as a firm opposition," the Jamaat said, adding, "Where govt acts in the public interest, we will support. Where accountability is required, we will speak."

Earlier in the day, the Jamaat challenged the election results demanding the election commission to hold recounting of votes in 32 constituencies where its candidates were "unfairly defeated." The party also retracted a Facebook message acknowledging victory of the BNP.

Cabinet to take oath tomorrow

The newly-elected members of parliament are scheduled to take oath on Tuesday at 10am, followed by the swearing-in ceremony of the cabinet in the evening around 4pm, local media reported. PTI

'Have no reason to question Europe's assessment of Navalny's death'

Budapest: US secretary of state **Marco Rubio** on Sunday called "troubling" a report by five European allies blaming Russia for killing late Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny using toxin from poison dart frogs, adding that Washington had no reason to question it.

"We obviously are aware of the report. It's a troubling report. We're aware of that case of Navalny and certainly... we don't have any reason to question it," Rubio told reporters.

The Russian govt, which has repeatedly denied any responsibility for Navalny's death, dismissed the latest allegations as "a Western propaganda hoax," according to Russia's state news agency TASS.

When asked why the US did not join the statement, Rubio said this was an endeavour by them. "Those countries came to that conclusion. They coordinated that. We chose - Doesn't mean we disagree with the outcome," Rubio said. REUTERS

Our officers are in touch with family: Consulate

▶ Continued from page 1

"We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones during this profoundly difficult time. The Consulate stands ready to provide all necessary assistance to the family, including coordination with local authorities and arrangements for the repatriation of mortal remains to India at the earliest. Our consular officers are in direct contact with the family and will support them with all required formalities and services," Consulate General of India said.

Asked about the developments, Sreenivasaiah said the last communication he received from the Consulate General of India in San Francisco was on Feb 14. "They sent a WhatsApp message saying they are trying to find my son. That, too, was not anything official," he said, declining to comment further on possible delays, stating he understood procedures had to be followed.

A day earlier, the Consulate General had posted on X expressing concern over Saketh's disappearance and that it was in touch with the family.

Techie's body reaches Bengaluru from Canada

Meanwhile, the mortal remains of 37-year-old IT professional Chandan Kumar, who was shot dead in Canada on Feb 7, reached Bengaluru around 10pm on Sunday.

Board of Peace members vow $5bn for Gaza: Trump

US President Donald Trump said Board of Peace member states will announce at an upcoming meeting on Thursday a pledge of more than $5 billion for reconstruction and humanitarian efforts in Gaza.

In a post on Truth Social on Sunday, Trump wrote that member states have also committed thousands of personnel toward a UN-authorised stabilisation force and local police in the Palestinian enclave. The US president said Thursday's gathering, the first official meeting of the group, will take place at the Donald J Trump Institute of Peace, which the state department recently renamed after the president. Delegations from more than 20 countries, including heads of state, are expected to attend. The board's creation was endorsed by a UN Security Council resolution as part of the Trump administration's plan to end the war between Israel and Palestinian Islamist group Hamas in Gaza.

Israel and Hamas agreed to the plan last year with a ceasefire officially taking effect in Oct, although both sides have accused each other repeatedly of violating the ceasefire.

According to Gaza's health ministry, more than 590 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli troops in the territory since the ceasefire began. Israel has said four of its soldiers have been killed by Palestinian militants in the same period.

While regional West Asian powers including Turkiye, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Israel — as well as emerging nations such as Indonesia — have joined the board, global powers and traditional Western US allies have been more cautious. Indonesia's military also said on Sunday that up to 8,000 troops are expected to be ready by the end of June for a potential deployment to Gaza. REUTERS

US MILITARY BOARDS ANOTHER OIL TANKER IN INDIAN OCEAN

Reuters

The US military boarded an oil tanker in the Indian Ocean after tracking the vessel for thousands of miles, saying it tried to circumvent President Trump's energy blockade in the Caribbean against sanctioned ships. The Pentagon, in a post on X Sunday, said US forces conducted a 'right-of-visit, maritime interdiction' on the Veronica III without incident. Video footage posted by the department appeared to show US soldiers boarding a helicopter and then positioning themselves aboard the tanker. The Veronica III, which travels under the Panamanian flag, is subject to US sanctions related to Iran, according to the treasury department's Office of Foreign Assets Control. BLOOMBERG

'Clown show': Obama on Trump's monkey video

Washington: Former US president **Barack Obama** criticised a lack of shame and decorum in the country's political discourse, responding on Saturday for the first time to a post on President Donald Trump's social media account that depicted him and first lady Michelle as monkeys.

In an interview with political commentator Brian Tyler Cohen, Obama also compared the actions of agents enforcing the president's immigration crackdown in Minnesota to dictatorships.

"The discourse has devolved into a level of cruelty that we haven't seen before... Just days ago, Donald Trump put a picture of you, your face on an ape's body," Cohen said in the interview. "And so again, we've seen the devolution of the discourse. How do we come back from a place that we have fallen into?" Without naming Trump, Obama responded by saying the majority of Americans "find this behaviour deeply troubling."

"There's this sort of clown show that's happening in social media and on television, and what is true is that there doesn't seem to be any shame about this among people who used to feel like you had to have some sort of decorum and a sense of propriety and respect for the office, right? That's lost." He predicted that such messaging will hurt Trump's Republicans in midterm elections, that "ultimately, the answer is going to come from the American people."

Turning to Trump's policies, Obama criticised his immigration crackdown in Minnesota and blasted the conduct of agents. Obama called the behaviour of federal officers, as the sort that "in the past we've seen in authoritarian countries and we've seen in dictatorships." AFP

DAILY PLANET

Reuters

FROZEN IN LOVE: People take an icy plunge in the Baltic Sea during an event to celebrate Valentine's Day in Sopot, Poland, on Sunday

'First feline' Larry marks 15 years as Britain's top cat

In turbulent political times, stability comes with four legs, whiskers and a fondness for napping. Larry the cat celebrates 15 years on Sunday as the British govt's official rodent-catcher and unofficial first feline, a reassuring presence who has served under six prime ministers. Sometimes it seems like they have served under him. "Larry the cat's approval ratings will be very high," said Philip Howell, a Cambridge University professor who has studied the history of human-animal relations. The gray-and-white tabby's rags-to-riches story has taken him from stray on the streets to Britain's seat of power, 10 Downing St., where he bears the official title chief mouser to the cabinet office. Adopted by then-PM David Cameron, Larry entered Downing Street on Feb 15, 2011. According to a profile on the UK govt website, his duties include "greeting guests to the house, inspecting security defenses and testing antique furniture for napping quality."

NY mayor surprises couples at marriage bureau: An hour before Matthew Cruz and Molly McGhee were supposed to wed at the Manhattan Marriage Bureau this month, the couple realised that they had forgotten their marriage license. Cruz, a 38-year-old audio engineer, furiously pedalled an electric bike back to their apartment in Brooklyn. McGhee, 31, saw it as a miracle when her fiancé returned with the document moments before their 10.30am ceremony. They made their way inside, only to be greeted by their second surprise of the day: Mayor **Zohran Mamdani** was there, and he wanted to officiate their wedding. "Are you kidding me?" McGhee responded. "It took me a full 45 seconds to get our rings out because I was shaking," Cruz added. Mamdani made an unexpected trip to the bureau on Feb 5 to officiate weddings for six couples. The visit was an anniversary celebration for Mamdani, who had married Rama Duwaji at the same office almost a year ago.

What French romance novels could tell us about AI and translation jobs

Jeanna Smialek

Brussels: The European Union, with its 27 nations and two dozen official languages, is a centre of the translation and interpretation industry. That is why, in Brussels and The Hague and Paris, a recent nugget of literary news has generated so much conversation.

Harlequin France — purveyor of titles like "Médecins et Célibataires" ("Doctors and Singles") and "Passion Pour un Inconnu" ("Passion for a Stranger") — recently said that it would be running tests with Fluent Planet, a company that uses artificial intelligence to make translation cheaper and faster. The move was met with both outrage and resignation within the industry. Translator groups called Harlequin's decision to cut ties with some human translators "unacceptable." Translators themselves posted about the "sad news."

Many publishers reached out to Fluent Planet to ask if they, too, could get a quote for AI-assisted translation. "The demand is increasing now," said Thierry Tavakelian, a founder of Fluent Planet, which uses machine-based translation under human supervision.

The technology's progress has spurred warnings that translation jobs could go the way of carriage drivers and typists. Recent research, on which industries are most likely to be shaped by generative AI, identified translation and interpreting as the most affected. "One day, thanks to AI, we will no longer need interpreters," German Chancellor Friedrich Merz predicted in Sept.

Getty Images

Harlequin France recently said that it would be running tests with a company that uses AI to make translation cheaper and faster

But many experts suggest that such predictions are oversimplified, arguing that AI will probably change language work rather than make it obsolete. Multinational organisations including the EU and Nato to offer a snapshot of the shift. "The pressure is really clear," said Anna Wyndham, the head of research at Slator, a language industry analyst. "But that doesn't mean that the profession is collapsing."

Many translators and industry experts say human expertise will still be needed. Employment in translation and interpretation has continued to climb in the EU in the past 10 years, according to official figures. But pockets of change are apparent, and AI seems to be affecting job quality.

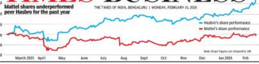
A translation industry survey in Britain suggested that more than one-third of translators had lost work to AI. According to that report, "All point the finger to an indiscriminate use of language technology, in particular artificial intelligence and dedicated machine translation, to cut costs and replace or minimise human translation work."

Unlike other industries, which are just beginning to grapple with the implications of AI, the disruption in translation is well under way. In the past few years, AI-powered tools have been improving digital translations and making real-time subtitles more accurate.

For some common language pairs, the quality now rivals or is even more consistently accurate than human translation in some tests of simple tasks, said Jarek Kutylowski, founder of DeepL, an AI translation company in Germany. "The change is going to be profound," Kutylowski said. NYT

Consumers are buying fewer traditional toys and spending more on digital games tied to hit online shows and films. Share price of Mattel, the maker of Barbie and Hot Wheels is down 18% since the start of this year due to its dependence on physical toys and struggle with inventory issues. Meanwhile, Hasbro, known for franchises like Marvel and Peppa Pig, saw a 24% jump in its stock this year on the back of its timely pivot to digital gaming

Source: Reuters



Mattel aims to direct $110mn investments in 2026 towards digital games. Meanwhile, **Hasbro** is already reaping gains from its digital shift, with an 86% jump in its digital gaming revenue in the Oct-Dec quarter

India-UK free trade pact likely to be in place in April: Official

New Delhi: The India-UK free trade agreement is likely to be implemented in April 2026, says an official. India and the UK, on July 24, 2025, signed the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement under which 99% of Indian exports will enter UK market at zero duty, while tariffs on British products, such as cars and whisky will be reduced in India. The two countries have also signed the Double Contributions Convention pact to ensure temporary workers would not have to duplicate social levies in either country. AGENCIES

crazy bosses

Hero Moto to push growth in global mkts

New Delhi: Hero MotoCorp aims to strengthen its presence in segments such as scooters, premium bikes, and electric vehicles, where it remains under-represented, says company's CEO Harshvardhan Chitale. It also expects to expand presence in global markets and parts and accessories business. AGENCIES

In a turnaround, FPIs infuse ₹19,675cr in Feb

New Delhi: Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) staged a sharp turnaround in early Feb, pumping Rs 19,675 crore into equities in first fortnight, supported by the US-India trade deal and easing global macro concerns. The inflows follow three consecutive months of selling, with FPIs pulling out Rs 35,962 crore in Jan, Rs 22,611 crore in Dec, and Rs 3,765 crore in Nov. AGENCIES

Not satisfied with India growth: L'Oreal

New Delhi: L'Oreal is not satisfied with its performance in Indian market, where it has not gained any market share in 2025, despite recording high single-digit growth, said global CEO Nicolas Hieronimus. India, which contributes roughly 1% of L'Oreal's turnover, needs a lot of effort, he said. AGENCIES

'Gold, silver prices set to face volatility'

New Delhi: Precious metal prices are expected to witness further consolidation, with volatility likely to persist as investors track key US economic data, including inflation numbers, GDP readings and policy signals from US Fed, analysts said. Traders will also watch US labour data. AGENCIES

Blackstone leads $1.2bn raise for homegrown AI firm Neysa

Funds To Help Build AI Infra, 20K Graphics Processing Units

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> Enterprises increasingly want sovereign AI to ensure data remains within the country, with many financial institutions opting for air-gapped GPUs or private cloud setups — both of which we support. We see strong demand from enterprises, startups, govt bodies, research institutions and global frontier labs driving rapid growth. With roughly 50,000-60,000 GPUs in India today, we expect that number to rise sharply over the next few years.
>
> **Sharad Sanghi** | COFOUNDER, NEYSA

Bengaluru: In a big-ticket bet, Blackstone is leading a $1.2 billion funding round in AI cloud platform Neysa, bolstering the company's push to build large-scale AI infrastructure. Blackstone and its co-investors committed up to $600 million in equity, with the company planning to secure an additional $600 million in debt financing, subject to documentation. Blackstone, through its relationships, is also helping enable $600 million in debt funding. Other equity investors include Teachers' Venture Growth, TVS Capital, 360 One Asset, and Nexus Venture Partners.

Following the investment, the private equity giant will hold a majority stake in the homegrown AI platform. The funding is expected to accelerate Neysa's expansion plans, including scaling its GPU capacity in India to over 20,000 from about 1,200 currently backing the country's AI buildout. Neysa's AI cloud platform enables enterprises, startups, and PSUs to securely and cost-effectively deploy and scale AI workloads. Neysa, which counts Juspay, Swiggy, and Perfios as key customers, previously raised $50 million.

Sharad Sanghi, cofounder of Neysa, said the planned deployment of 20,000 GPUs aligns with India's sovereign AI push. "India's AI mission is enabling foundational model training by research institutions and private companies. Enterprises increasingly want sovereign AI to ensure data remains within the country, with many financial institutions opting for air-gapped GPUs or private cloud setups—both of which we support. We see strong demand from enterprises, startups, govt bodies, research institutions, and global frontier labs driving rapid growth. With roughly 50,000-60,000 GPUs in India today, we expect that number rises sharply over the next few years." Following the tax holiday, he said global frontier labs are also increasingly exploring the establishment of inferencing clusters in India. Sanghi, who previously cofounded Netmagic with Anindya Das in 1998 with the goal of becoming India's premier managed hosting service provider, sold the company to Japanese telecom giant NTT Communications in 2012.

Ganesh Mani, senior managing director at Blackstone Private Equity, told **TOI** that it is among the largest investors in AI infrastructure globally and a major owner of data centres, with investments spanning the entire value chain—from cloud platforms to AI labs. "In India, the GPU infrastructure market is still nascent at about 60,000 units, but we believe it could expand nearly 30-fold to around 2 million in a short period. We are backing what we view as the No1 management team in this space, with proven technical capabilities and customer validation. Beyond capital, we bring access to our global ecosystem, help secure critical supply chains such as data centre capacity and GPUs, and support go-to-market efforts—we see ourselves as business builders," Mani said.

With Neysa raising $600 million in debt, **TOI** asked about the risks of using GPUs as collateral for high-interest loans. Sanghi said the exposure is largely mitigated by strong contracts, often with AAA-rated companies. He added that while global financing against GPUs can reach loan-to-value ratios of 85%-90%, the company is adopting a more conservative stance at around 50%. When asked how enterprises should manage the risks from rapid advances in GPU technology that can shorten hardware lifecycles and accelerate depreciation, Sanghi said, "That's why they outsource it to players like us—we take on that risk. While newer chips continue to launch, older GPUs still have strong secondary uses such as inference or model-as-a-service. We built our own orchestration, observability, and security platform, which is where we differentiate.

Apart from scaling to 20,000 GPUs, Neysa said its technology roadmap includes enhancing its orchestration platform, expanding its applications marketplace, strengthening security, and building an observability layer to efficiently manage tens of thousands of GPUs. Sanghi added that the company plans to hire talent to support its infrastructure buildout, including systems engineers to deploy large clusters, network and storage specialists, software developers for its platforms, security teams, and machine learning and GenAI experts.

Bain Cap must address stakes in arms for Manappuram buy

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Mumbai: Bain Capital will need to address its holdings in Tyger Capital and Tyger Housing Finance, acquired from the Adani group, to meet regulatory pre-conditions set by RBI for completing its proposed acquisition of joint control in Manappuram Finance, according to disclosures after the central bank granted approval.

RBI has cleared Bain entities to acquire up to 41.7% stake and joint control in Manappuram Finance, but the approval is subject to conditions. Any increase in shareholding beyond 26% after one year, other than through warrant conversion under the approved structure, will require prior RBI approval. The regulator has also asked Bain to submit an action plan within a stipulated timeline to ensure that it does not control more than one non-banking financial company or housing finance company of the same category.

RBI NORMS

The approval makes the Manappuram transaction contingent on separate regulatory clearances for its subsidiaries Asirvad Micro Finance and Manappuram Home Finance, and on completion of the mandatory open offer to public shareholders. The investment agreement for the deal was signed in March 2025, and the transaction cannot be consummated until all conditions are met.

These requirements draw attention to Bain's exposure to Tyger Capital and Tyger Housing Finance. The Adani group entities operate in segments overlapping with Manappuram's businesses, including agriculture finance, MSME lending and affordable housing. RBI norms do not permit a single investor group to exercise control over multiple NBFCs of same category, a rule aimed at limiting concentration risk and enabling clearer supervisory oversight.

Adani Capital and Adani Housing were acquired by Bain in 2023, when PE firm bought a 90% stake for Rs 1,440 crore, at a valuation of around Rs 1,600 crore. The transaction included Rs 983 crore of primary capital infusion and Rs 409 crore liquidity for growth.

TOI IN THE CLASSROOM

How To Build Your Mutual Fund Portfolio, One Step At A Time

Wealth managers say first-time mutual fund investors—and those shifting money from fixed income products—should construct their portfolios gradually rather than committing large sums at once

Invesco Mutual Fund

An investor education and awareness initiative

For Know Your Customer (KYC) guidelines along with the documentary requirements and procedure for change of address, phone number, bank details, etc., please visit the Education and Guidance section on www.invescomutualfund.com. Investor should deal with only SEBI registered Mutual Funds, details of which can be verified under "Intermediaries/Market Infrastructure Institutions" on https://www.sebi.gov.in/index.html. For any grievance / complaint, please call us on 1800-209-0007 or write to us at mfservices@invesco.com. Alternatively, complaints can be registered on the SEBI SCORES Portal at https://scores.sebi.gov.in

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

How To Start Building Your MF Portfolio?

Start slow. Investors should build their portfolios over time instead of allocating everything in one go. The mix of assets—equity, fixed income, international equity and precious metals—should reflect one's investment horizon and risk profile. Aggressive investors may prefer a higher equity allocation, including some exposure to mid- and small-cap funds.

Which Funds Can One Start With?

Young investors with investment horizons of seven years or more can begin with Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) in diversified equity funds, index funds and multi-asset allocation funds. Those who want to avoid fund-manager risk can choose large-cap index funds that track the Nifty 50, Nifty Next 50, Nifty 100 or the Sensex. Conservative investors could start with a multi-asset allocation fund, where the manager spreads money across equity, debt, precious metals and international equity. Aggressive equity investors can begin with index funds and diversified equity funds.

Are Equity Schemes The Only Options?

Investors who want to park money temporarily—either before deploying a lump sum or while waiting for clearer market cues—can consider arbitrage funds, which offer tax-efficient returns with low volatility. Those whose income is not taxable or who fall in lower tax brackets may look at short-duration debt funds, which carry minimal interest-rate risk. These options typically deliver 6-7%, materially higher than the 2.5-3% available on savings-bank deposits.

When Should Investors Opt For Riskier Funds?

Mid-cap, small-cap and thematic funds aren't ideal for first-time investors or those transitioning from fixed-income products. Once investors understand how equities behave and are comfortable with associated risks, they can consider modest allocations to mid and small-cap funds. Seasoned investors may earmark a small portion—generally not more than 10% of their overall portfolio—for thematic ideas. If their risk profile allows allocation to mid and small-caps, a staggered approach is preferable. Experts warn against narrow themes.

— PRASHANT MAHESH

Credit growth at 12% beats 10% deposit rise in April-Jan

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

LENDERS RAISE GROWTH TARGETS

- Deposits had grown 8.1% and credit 8.7% in April 2024 to Jan 2025
- Between Jan 2025 and Jan 2026, credit growth rose to 19-month high of 14.6%, compared with 11.4% a year earlier
- Deposit growth improved to 12.5% from 10.3% in the same period
- Most of the lending is being funded through household savings rather than surplus central bank liquidity, says bankers
- This makes credit growth more closely tied to economic activity and GDP expansion

Mumbai: Bank credit growth continued to outpace deposit mobilisation this financial year, tightening system liquidity even as lenders step up loan disbursements. By Jan-end 2026, the incremental credit-deposit (CD) ratio had climbed to 96.9%, sharply higher than the outstanding CD ratio of 82.3%, indicating that banks lent out nearly Rs 97 for every Rs 100 of fresh deposits raised during the year.

Data from the Reserve Bank of India showed aggregate deposits grew 10.2% in the financial year to Jan 31, with banks adding Rs 23 lakh crore. Credit expanded faster, rising 12.2% or Rs 22.3 lakh crore over the same period. In the year-ago period, deposits had grown 8.1% and credit 8.7%. On a year-on-year basis, credit growth accelerated to 19-month high of 14.6% as of end-Jan 2026, compared with 11.4% a year earlier, while deposit growth improved to 12.5% from 10.3%. The sustained gap underscores that credit demand remains strong relative to deposit accretion.

Non-food credit rose Rs 25.7 lakh crore year-on-year to Rs 203.9 lakh crore. Bankers said the bulk of lending is being funded through household savings rather than surplus central bank liquidity, making credit growth more closely tied to economic activity and GDP expansion.

Reflecting the momentum, lenders have raised growth targets which were communicated in their third quarter earnings call. C S Setty, chairman of State Bank of India, said the bank was "balancing resource costs alongside growth visibility of at least 10% in corporate credit over the next two quarters, supported by a Rs 7 lakh crore pipeline", while gaining market share in home and auto loans. SBI has revised its credit growth guidance to 13-15% for the year. At ICICI Bank, CFO Anindya Banerjee said the momentum was clearly visible. "We have seen a pickup in the sequential growth rate, and we see that momentum sustaining into the fourth quarter as well," he said, adding that the improvement was broad-based across retail and corporate segments.

Canara Bank MD and CEO Hardeep Singh Ahluwalia said retail and MSME loans were driving growth. "Our RAM book is showing a growth of 18.7%, led by retail, which has grown 31.4%, while MSME is up 13.7%," he said. He added that yields remained healthy, at 9.3% for MSME advances and 8.9% for retail loans, supporting margins.

Ahluwalia said Canara Bank plans to build further on the retail momentum. "Our advances growth guidance is more than 13.6%, and we will capitalise on the momentum that has been built," he said. On the liability side, he noted savings bank deposits were growing 8.5%, with individual savings accounts rising over 10%, while current accounts grew nearly 15%.

'Plenty of unknowns in US-India trade deal'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The India-US trade deal goes some way to alleviate stress on Indian exports but there are "plenty of unknowns" and leaves questions unanswered, says an analysis by Moody's Analytics, an arm of Moody's.

"The deal assumes that India will end its purchase of Russian oil, but there has been no confirmation from India," said a report by Aditi Raman, associate economist and Denise Cheok, economist, at Moody's Analytics.

The report said India has agreed to phase out its imports of Russian crude oil and replace them with US and Venezuelan crude, according to US officials.

It also said that Indian officials have not confirmed that statement, but major refineries have reduced purchases of Russian crude in recent months. India's crude imports from Russia dropped 27% year-on-year in Sept and 34% in Oct.

The US will cut its base tariff rate on goods from India to 18% from 50% under a new trade agreement. This brings down the effective tariff rate from an estimated 25% to around 15%, after key exemptions, said the report.

Buyouts help PE firms steer cos' future plans

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Mumbai: India's private equity playbook is evolving. Traditionally, PE investors took minority stakes and let founders run the show. Now, they are increasingly acquiring majority or controlling stakes, shaping companies' futures more directly.

While minority investments still dominate deal value, buyouts are gaining ground. Between 2021 to 2025, they made up 24% ($71 billion) of India's total private equity investments of $303 billion, making them the third-largest investment category after growth and startup investments, EY-IVCA data showed.

In a transaction last week, US-based Carlyle agreed to acquire a majority stake in Edelweiss's home finance business for $230 million, adding to the growing list of buyouts reshaping India's deal landscape, particularly in financial services, technology, and healthcare.

These transactions are largely led by foreign firms such as Blackstone, Brookfield, Carlyle, Advent, EQT and KKR.

Unlike in the past, when founders and business families were reluctant to sell to PE, there has been a "sea change" in attitude, as private equity is now seen as a reliable partner, said Vivek Soni of EY. "Succession issues, exits from non-core businesses, buying out other family members or earlier PE investors, and managing volatility risks are key triggers for control trades," he added.

BUYOUT BOOM

Key buyouts over past few yrs:

- **2021** | Carlyle acquired Hexaware Technologies from EQT for $3bn
- **2021** | Blackstone's new fund and other PEs bought over 50% of Mphasis from Blackstone for $2.8bn
- **2024** | Brookfield purchased ATC's India tower unit for $2bn
- **2025** | New Mountain Capital bought majority stake in Access Healthcare for $1.5bn

"Historically, India has seen minority stakes and growth capital play out, but the attractive returns and exit certainty of buyout investments eventually took centre stage," said Pancham Mukim, India head of private equity at Everstone Capital, adding that "From a founder's perspective, the new generation has been more open to control transactions and has undertaken large secondary sales to create family offices."

While most pure-play buyouts (excluding infrastructure and real estate) have involved sponsors selling controlling stakes to other sponsors, industry expects founders and families to become the largest source of such trades in the coming years.

Mukim added "Sponsors are increasingly acting like strategic investors—building platforms rather than making passive investments." Their ability to attract seasoned professional managers and strengthen governance has helped them run and scale businesses that were previously family-managed.

Soni said PE is doubling down on pure-play buyouts as exit returns have been "good". EY-IVCA data showed they realised $48 billion between 2021 and 2025 through exits. Secondary sales accounted for the largest share, followed by strategic exits and stock market listings.

While buoyant capital markets offer PE an attractive exit route through IPOs at strong valuations, they are also the biggest competitor in striking control trades. Elevated equity markets raise seller expectations, widen the bid-ask gap between founders and PE buyers, thereby slowing deal closures.

What's helping VCs to strike out on their own

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TECH RISE KEY IN VCs GOING SOLO

- HNIs and family offices are actively backing emerging VC funds as tech becomes a mainstream asset class and more capital is available for tech in India compared to 10 yrs ago
- Govt push has boosted VCs: SIDBI's ₹10k cr fund (plus another ₹10k cr announced) gives new VC funds a cushion
- Public markets are now more open to tech IPOs

> When professionals leave to start their own firm, there's a multiplier effect—founders have another pedigreed venture firm to go to, new investment strategies get funded, and a new class of investment professionals get groomed. Of course, starting a new VC firm is fraught with risk"
>
> **Hitesh Banglani** | PARTNER AT STELLARIS VENTURE PARTNERS

Mumbai: Earlier this month, when three managing directors at Peak XV Partners (formerly Sequoia India and Southeast Asia) quit abruptly, that too when the firm was in the thick of closing a fresh billion dollar fund, it became a talking point across investment circles. Ashish Agrawal, Ishaan Mittal and Tejeshwi Sharma will start a new venture capital (VC) firm. It is not really unusual for VC investors to strike out on their own—back in 2016, for instance, when the Indian startup and VC ecosystem was still up and coming, three senior executives quit Helion Ventures to start their own firm Stellaris Venture Partners. Quite a few other instances followed—consider Orios Venture Partners for one, which saw two executives leaving the firm in 2023.

What, however, has changed is that more VCs now have the wherewithal to start their own funds. High net worth individuals and family offices are keen on investing in hot tech startups and are more than willing to partner or back new, emerging VC funds. Besides, the govt has lent a helping hand to boost growth of the industry—the Sidbi Fund of Funds, set up with an initial Rs 10,000 crore corpus has allowed many investors some cushion. The fund essentially backs VC firms, enabling them to invest in startups. Another Rs 10,000 crore such fund was announced last year. "They constitute around 30% of various VC funds. VC fundraising has become easier as the asset class has become mainstream," said Siddarth Pai, founding partner at 3one4 Capital. Compared to a decade ago, there is materially more capital available for technology in India. The perception of tech businesses has matured, and public markets are more receptive to tech IPOs," said Anup Jain, who left as the managing partner at Orios Venture Partners alongside Rajeev Suri to start their own VC firm BlueGreen Ventures in 2024. Large exits or profits accrued from large deals also helps investors to put money into new funds.

Starting a fund, however, has its own set of challenges. Investors, when working with established funds typically tend to focus more on investments and the returns they can generate. They do not have a lot of expertise in raising funds. "Those GPs (general partner) who have had prior experience at handling investor relations, fundraising and compliances in addition to purely investing have an easier ride than those who have only done prior investing," said Jain. Even so, having delivered successful bets and scaling startups to growth as well as getting access to the LP (limited partners) network, many VCs are now taking the plunge and starting funds. The recent exits of Agrawal, Mittal and Sharma at Peak XV happened due to disagreements over economics and payouts, MD Shailendra Singh said publicly.

When hate didn't get a complimentary match pass

No handshakes at the toss between captains, but for India-Pak greats, fans at Premadasa, it was just cricket

THE TIMES OF INDIA IN COLOMBO

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Colombo: The Indo-Pak relations on the field, in front of cameras, stayed where it had to stay. No handshakes.

In Colombo on Sunday, there wasn't the animosity that led up to the Asia Cup final last September. No one was taking pot-shots at each other, and television analysts from India were interviewing Pakistani players. But once it came to the toss, Salman Ali Agha and Surya Kumar Yadav handcuffed themselves from doing the most natural thing that they did all their lives — shaking hands with the opposition captain.

Agha said on Saturday that he wants cricket to be played in the spirit that it always was. Surya didn't rule out the handshake either; but the ice couldn't melt.

But if you kept an eye on the proceedings before the game, you could see that people around the sport were ready to move on from the off-field animosities that made the cricket world toxic.

Usman Tariq, the slinger mystery spinner of Pakistan, was doing warm-ups, and Harbhajan Singh, one of the staunchest critics of his action, was standing close by. Tariq didn't care for whatever was said in the lead-up to the game. He did a 'salaam' to the senior practitioner of his art, and the Indian great reciprocated.

It wasn't just that. Harbhajan interviewed Sahibzada Farhan, who was India's enemy No 1 in Dubai a few months ago, and it all looked pretty cordial. But the frame of the day was when the off-spinner had a long conversation with Misbah ul Haq.

One couldn't help going back to the 2007 T20 final, when Misbah took on Bhajji and almost single-handedly turned the game. With Misbah still there, the Indian offie chose not to bowl the last over, and Joginder Sharma won the match for India. We don't know if that was discussed, but you could see the friendly vibes of the two greats.

Not too far away from the cricket action, Shabana Azmi, one of India's greatest actresses, was speaking at the Ceylon Literary & Arts Festival. Recently, she was seen in a meaty role in a cricket-related film, Ghoomer, and when TOI asked her how she feels about all that is happening in the sport, Azmi said: "We keep forgetting that cricketers from both sides of the border are friends with each other, and it's important that sports and arts should transcend national boundaries," adding that it should act as an "adhesive" between the 2 nations.

It drew quite a round of applause from the small gathering. And once you left the confines of the little auditorium and walked towards the massive Premadasa, you could see Indian and Pakistani fans getting their faces painted by the same artist. Of course, the Indians outnumbered the Pakistanis, but there wasn't an iota of animosity. During Pakistan's reply, at the fall of their sixth wicket in the 12th over, fans in green began exiting the ground. An Indian fan playfully told them, "You are leaving?" One Pakistani replied, "We all have to leave at some point," and then they shook hands.

Probably there's not much on the field either beyond the desperate desire to win a game of cricket. But then, that's not for public consumption.

Suryakumar Yadav and Salman Ali Agha at the toss before the India-Pak T20 World Cup match. Right: Indian and Pakistani fans enjoying themselves

Men In Maroon Red Hot

Holder, Hope Seal Super-Eight Spot For Windies, Side Dreams Of 2016 Encore

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Mumbai: West Indies thrashed Nepal by nine wickets at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Sunday to qualify for the Super Eights of the 2026 T20 World Cup, becoming the second team after South Africa to do so.

West Indies came into the tournament short of form, losing a T20I series against South Africa 2-1 in Jan and a three-match T20I series by the same scoreline to Nepal last Sept in Sharjah. However, a T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, where they emerged as champions when both countries previously hosted the event, seemed to bring out the best in the Caribbeans.

West Indies' former captain and present head coach Daren Sammy termed the Wankhede Stadium as "lucky" for them as they played flawless cricket to beat a listless Nepal, who flattered to deceive after an impressive opener against England.

The stars of West Indies' win were their former and current captains, Jason Holder and Shai Hope. Holder, who bounced back after conceding 0-34 in two overs in West Indies' 30-run win over England at the same venue earlier this week, took 4-27 as West Indies restricted Nepal to 133-8 after Nepal elected to bowl first on a pitch that seemed two-paced initially.

In a surprising move, West Indies dropped medium-pacer Romario Shepherd, who took a five-wicket haul, including a hat-trick, in the first match. His replacement, pacer Matthew Forde, bowled superbly with the new ball and finished with 1-10 in four overs which included a maiden-wicket over in the powerplay, a rarity in T20 cricket.

4/27 Jason Holder has produced his first four-wicket haul in T20 World Cup, bettering the 3-12 vs Zimbabwe at Hobart on Oct 19, 2022.

Chasing 134, Hope shrugged off poor scores of 0, 19 and 5 in the first three matches and led the way with 61 not out off 44 balls, with five fours and three sixes. He shared an unbeaten 91-run stand for the second wicket with Shimron Hetmyer, who stayed unbeaten on 46 off 32 balls, with four fours and two sixes.

Hope and fellow opener Brandon King provided a 43-run start in 33 balls. Hope executed a straight drive off Karan KC in the third over, while King made 22 off 17 balls before he was caught at mid-on off Nandan Yadav. Hope also hit three fours off Kami in the fifth over.

Nepal's biggest disappointment with the ball was leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane, who conceded 0-38 in three overs as Hope and Hetmyer attacked him.

Asked if the win against Nepal was sweet given West Indies' shock T20I series loss to them last year, Hope said at the post-match press conference, "Well, that's in the past. It's history. Nepal played good cricket then. We've got to stay in the present and we've got to ensure we play our best cricket because we see Nepal as a very good team regardless of who they're playing against and where. So, we needed to bring our 'A' game once again today. But today, we needed to get over the line to ensure our Super 8s qualification."

West Indies' last league game against Italy at Kolkata on Thursday is now of academic interest and they will play their first Super Eight game at the Wankhede on Feb 21. Nepal will play their final game against Scotland on Tuesday at Wankhede.

Sunday's result knocked Nepal out of the competition and left their large number of fans dejected. The heaving stands fell silent as the West Indian batters dominated, with Nepal's fans finding their voice only during a late surge led by Dipendra Singh Airee and Sompal Kami. Airee made 58 off 46 balls, with three fours and three sixes, while Kami scored 26 not out off 15 balls, with four fours, as they added 54 runs in 26 balls for the seventh wicket after Nepal slipped to 73 for six in 15 overs.

Brief Scores: Nepal 133 for 8 in 20 overs (Dipendra Singh Airee 58, Sompal Kami 26; Jason Holder 4-27) **lost to West Indies 134 for 1 in 15.2 overs** (Shai Hope 61, Shimron Hetmyer 46; Nandan Yadav 1-24).

Hurting Afghans seek a revival in campaign vs UAE

FACE-OFF

AFG vs UAE — TV TIME: 11 AM, STAR SPORTS, JIOHOTSTAR

HEAD TO HEAD

AFG	UAE
11	3

LAST FIVE MATCHES

AFG: L L L W W
UAE: W L L L L

VENUE: NEW DELHI

WEATHER: 23°C

ODDS	
AFG	UAE
1/10	8/1

NUMBERS GAME

14.3 Rashid Khan's strike-rate while claiming 40 wickets at 15.37 runs apiece — the best among Afghan bowlers with 15+ wickets in T20 World Cup.

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New Delhi: A defeat can bruise a team. A loss following a double Super Over can hollow it out. Afghanistan now face the tough task of picking themselves up mentally after their heartbreaking defeat to South Africa in Ahmedabad, as they take on UAE in a must-win T20 World Cup Group D clash here on Monday. Two losses in as many games have left Afghanistan's hopes hanging by a thread. Even if they are favourites to win their remaining fixtures against UAE and Canada, their fate is no longer entirely in their own hands. A New Zealand victory over Canada the following day would seal Afghanistan's exit.

This precarious position sits in contrast to the strides Afghanistan have made in recent years. A semifinal appearance in the 2024 edition of the T20 World Cup and a spirited showing in the ODI World cup in 2023, underlined their rise. Rashid Khan remains the sport's premier T20 spinner, Mujeeb Ur Rahman brings mystery to the fold, Azmatullah Omarzai is a genuine all-round force, Ibrahim Zadran offers them the steadiness with the bat. Zadran's opening partner Rahmanullah Gurbaz can turn games single-handedly, and old warhorse Mohammad Nabi is still up for a joust.

On paper, it is a line-up capable of challenging any side. Experts tipped them to make the Super Eights at least, if not go deeper. However, they are yet to bring their A-game to this tournament. Afghanistan will particularly look towards Zadran to rediscover form. Often the perfect foil to the attacking Gurbaz, Zadran's role as an anchor assumes added significance in the high-pressure environment of a World Cup, where stability can be as valuable as aggression.

While the conventional anchor's role in T20 cricket may be fading, Zadran has shown signs of evolving with the format. Yet this campaign has brought modest returns — 22 runs from two innings — and Afghanistan will expect a stronger showing at the top.

History, though, offers Afghanistan comfort. They hold an 11-3 win-loss record over UAE.

By contrast, UAE will go into the match with renewed confidence after their win over Canada, achieved at the same Arun Jaitley Stadium that will host their remaining group games. Familiarity with conditions could prove to be an advantage, but their path to qualification is far more complicated. They too depend on Canada upsetting New Zealand and script victories over both Afghanistan and South Africa on Wednesday. Even that may not suffice unless they significantly improve their net run-rate, which currently trails New Zealand's by a considerable margin.

Their hopes would hinge on the swashbuckling Sohaib Khan. Born in Gaya, Bihar, and educated at the Jamia Millia Islamia university in Delhi, the UAE batter showcased his destructive ability against Canada with a 29-ball 51 that shifted the game's momentum. UAE will look to him once again for inspiration.

It's win or bust for Oz vs Lanka

2021 Champs Take On Hosts With Super Eight Hopes Hanging By A Thread

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Australia arrive in Pallekele with no margin for error. The shock defeat to Zimbabwe turned their game against Sri Lanka into a must-win encounter. Another loss would leave their Super Eight hopes dependent on unlikely permutations and combinations. The equation is stark: win or pack your bags.

Selection is the other area of concern. Star batter Steve Smith has arrived in Sri Lanka as cover for the injured Mitchell Marsh.

But he cannot play until he is formally drafted into the 15-man squad. Australia can do that without dropping anyone because they still have a spare slot after not naming a replacement for the injured pacer Josh Hazlewood. Smith becomes a live option if Marsh misses again. The captain remains under an injury cloud after internal testicular bleeding, and his availability shapes Australia's balance at the top of the order.

Tim David is back from a hamstring issue, and Marcus Stoinis was cleared after a blow to his left hand, after he returned to bat in the Zimbabwe game.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, started clean, with two wins propelling them to the top of Group B. They are still smarting under the loss of their crafty spinner Wanindu Hasaranga, who was ruled out of this T20 World Cup with a hamstring tear. Dushan Hemantha came in and already had a run, but the onus lies on Maheesh Theekshana and Dunith Wellalage. Captain Dasun Shanaka is in charge, with their pace stocks getting reshuffled.

FACE-OFF

SL vs AUS — TV TIME: 7 PM, STAR SPORTS, JIOHOTSTAR

HEAD TO HEAD

SL	AUS
10	16

LAST FIVE MATCHES

SL: W W L L L
AUS: L W L L L

VENUE: PALLEKELE

WEATHER: 19°C

ODDS	
SL	AUS
6/4	5/10

NUMBERS GAME

40 Wickets taken by Adam Zampa at an average of 13.67, including two four-wicket hauls and a career-best 5-19 vs Bangladesh at Dubai on Nov 4, 2021. It's the most by any Aussie bowler.

QUALIFICATION SCENARIOS

- Australia have two games left, but even two wins may not be enough to qualify for the knockouts.
- If Sri Lanka beat Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe beat Ireland, Australia, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe would all finish on six points, and then the net run rate would decide who goes through.
- To qualify, Australia need some outside support. They have to hope for Sri Lanka to lose to Zimbabwe or Zimbabwe to lose to Ireland.
- If Australia lose to Sri Lanka on Monday, they can still survive in the tournament, but only if they beat Oman and Zimbabwe lose to both Ireland and Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka, on the other hand, need just a victory against Australia to sail into the Super Eights.

Eng hoping to turn the corner against Italy

FACE-OFF

ENG vs ITA — TV TIME: 3 PM, STAR SPORTS, JIOHOTSTAR

HEAD TO HEAD

ENG	ITA
0	0

LAST FIVE MATCHES

ENG: W L W W W
ITA: W L W L L

VENUE: KOLKATA

WEATHER: 27°C

ODDS	
ENG	ITA
1/10	10/1

NUMBERS GAME

7.05 Economy rate of Adil Rashid while claiming 36 wickets at 23.00 runs apiece in 33 matches — the best by an England bowler in T20 World Cups.

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Kolkata: For England, Monday's match against Italy at the Eden Gardens here should be an easy one, even though they have not been at their best in the ongoing T20 Word Cup. However, the English camp is not taking anything for granted. With the Super Eights place not yet fully secured, they are not going to take their opponents lightly either. And that means no experiments.

"If we'd have won against West Indies then we might have had the option, but I think we've just got to pick the best side possible and just make sure that we get through to Super Eights," England skipper Harry Brook said after the win over Scotland on Saturday. That game didn't quite turn out the way Brook had wanted and he is aware that there has to be improvements going forward.

Even a below-par England might be good enough for Italy, but surely they'll have to do better in the Super Eights. So far, the only team of some quality they faced have been the West Indies and England failed that test.

The run chase has been a bit of a worry for England, with openers Phil Salt and Jos Buttler not getting them off to fliers as would have been expected. "The run chases haven't been as straightforward as we'd have liked to," Brook admitted, while hoping that the game against Italy would see them turning the corner.

Italy know that they have to punch much above their weight to upset England and regular captain Wayne Madsen, who unfortunately had to miss out due to an injury, said his team is mentally prepared to do that. "For us to compete with the bigger teams, we have to throw punches," he said after nets on Sunday. "We can't just take punches. So we have to be aggressive in how we play our cricket."

"We're not just here to come and make up numbers," Madsen warned. "We're here to perform and to win games. We're going to do everything in our power tomorrow to do that."

Rashid wants more exposure for Af

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New Delhi: Heartbreak in cricket can linger, replaying in fragments long after the game is over. For Afghanistan, the double Super Over defeat to South Africa in Ahmedabad has been one such moment. A match that slipped from their grasp more than once and now threatens to derail their T20 World Cup campaign. Skipper Rashid Khan, on Sunday, admitted that the pain is still raw but insisted the team must channel the disappointment into renewed resolve.

Afghanistan had opportunities to close out the contest within the regulation 20 overs and again in the first Super Over, only for the match to stretch into a second eliminator where South Africa eventually prevailed. The narrow defeat came after a five-wicket loss to New Zealand in their opening match.

"It is quite heartbreaking. Last one and a half years, we worked very hard... keeping our hopes of going deep in the T20 World Cup in mind, but sometimes it doesn't go your way. The most important thing is the mindset we played with and the effort we put during our first two games," Rashid said, acknowledging the emotional toll of the result.

For a side that has steadily risen in world cricket, the loss felt particularly cruel. Yet Rashid believes the experience, however painful, could serve a greater purpose. "It's going to help us. It's not only the upcoming games, but the upcoming cricket we have. So, there are lots of positives we can take from those two games," he said.

The lingering sting of near misses is not unfamiliar territory for Afghanistan. Rashid drew parallels with their agonising defeat to Australia in the 2023 ODI World Cup, when they had reduced the opposition to 91 for 7 before Glenn Maxwell's blistering double century turned the match on its head. That memory, Rashid said, stayed with the team until they exacted revenge at the 2024 T20 World Cup.

> "As a team, if you don't get a chance to play against a big team regularly, that's what happens. If we played more T20s against South Africa, New Zealand, we would have had an idea of where this team can beat us and where we can do better." —Rashid Khan

"It's very hard to lose a game that we have in our hands, like a couple of times, and then it just slips out of your hand. It doesn't go away from your mind. Like, the game we played against Australia in 2023 ODI World Cup, it never goes out of the mind, until we won against them in the 2024 T20 World Cup," Rashid said.

Beyond the immediate disappointment, Rashid pointed to a broader challenge confronting Afghanistan, and that's lack of regular exposure against top-tier opposition. According to him, limited bilateral opportunities against leading teams make World Cup encounters "disproportionately demanding".

"As a team, if you don't get a chance to play against a big team regularly, that's what happens. If we played more T20s against South Africa, New Zealand, we would have had an idea of where this team can beat us and where we can do better. You just play them once a year, and that too at a World Cup event. It is such a time and occasion where you have no choice of making a mistake," he said.

Also scheduling realities often leave teams like Afghanistan with little margin for error.

"If you play two matches in four days against New Zealand and South Africa, then your World Cup can end in four. We lost both the matches in four days; we are out of the World Cup mostly. So, this pressure is different. If you make a small mistake, you're out of the competition," Rashid said.

Greater exposure, he believes, would help Afghanistan better understand and counter the strategies of elite teams. "If you play with them, you'll get an idea. If you don't play, then they'll come with new planning every time... like we saw with New Zealand, they came with aggressive mindset."

Skipper Markram hails clinical SA performance

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Ahmedabad: South Africa cemented their place at the top of Group D after contrasting victories against Afghanistan and New Zealand, with captain Aiden Markram calling their win over New Zealand at the Narendra Modi Stadium here on Saturday their "fullest performance" so far.

Reflecting on the team's display, Markram said, "A lot closer to the fullest of potential tonight. I thought pretty much all areas were really good and again it just came from clarity and conviction in that plan or that ball you're going to bowl or the approach you're going to take towards a certain bowler with the bat. So, it's nice to see the boys improving, getting better and tonight was a really good all-round performance."

Markram said it was mentally easier to be part of a victory like the one against the Black Caps. "It's a lot more comfortable putting together slightly more clinical performances. So the aim will always be for it to feel like it felt tonight. It's not always going to work out that way, but definitely a slightly easier one to deal with, mentally at least," said the 31-year-old, whose unbeaten 86 helped steamroll the Black Caps by seven wickets.

Asked if the South African bowlers' execution of change of pace was pre-planned because of knowledge about the playing surface, Markram responded, "It's not like a set plan. It very much depends on the approach of the batters as well. If a guy's really teeing off and trying to take you down, you need to play with your swing a bit, and that's through a change of pace. There'll be phases in the game where it can be tricky with our fast bowlers because when they hit a length hard, if anyone can find something, it is them. So, it's a fine balance to try and manage. The secret tonight was there was a lot of conviction behind what they did and what they were feeling, and that gut feel. We went with that and it did hold in the wicket in that first innings. Obviously, the wicket did get slightly better, but the boys still had to land it, and they did that really well."

US down Namibia, qualification hopes alive

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Chennai: On Sunday at the MA Chidambaram Stadium, opportunity knocked twice, and USA skipper Monank Patel (52, 30 balls; 3x4, 3x6) and all-rounder Sanjay Krishnamurthi (68*, 33 balls; 4x4, 6x6) flung the door wide open. Granted a life apiece, the American pair went on to smash scintillating half-centuries to propel their team to a 31-run win over Namibia in their final group-stage outing.

While Super Eights qualification remains a long shot, the victory keeps USA's slender hopes flickering like a candle. For Namibia, however, the lights have gone out, even with one game left.

Chasing a stiff target of 200, Namibia began with good intent as opener Louren Steenkamp scored a gritty 58 (off 38 balls; 5x4, 3x6). However, the early surge evaporated under the Chepauk floodlights as the asking rate climbed, and they eventually finished on 168-6.

Opting to bat first, USA exploded to 65-0 in the powerplay. Skipper Monank made Namibia pay for a first-over reprieve, as he was dropped on 0. Left-arm pacer JJ Smit bore the brunt in the sixth over, with Monank hitting three stunning boundaries off him. He laid the foundation alongside opener Shayan Jahangir, sharing a 68-run stand for the first wicket.

Namibia turned to their spinners to stem USA's charge, and were successful for a brief period before Sanjay came to the crease. He took a few deliveries to assess the conditions and then unleashed an array of strokes, taking the Namibian bowlers to the cleaners.

In the 17th over, Sanjay was dropped on 32 by Namibian skipper Gerhard Erasmus off left-arm seamer Ruben Trumpelmann's bowling.

Making the most of his lifeline, Sanjay struck back in the same over. He first drilled a four and then three towering sixes in succession to bring up his half-century from 23 deliveries in style.

Brief Scores: USA 199 for 4 in 20 overs (Monank Patel 52, Sanjay Krishnamurthi 68 not out; Willem Myburgh 2/22) **bt Namibia 168 for 6 in 20 overs** (Louren Steenkamp 58; Shadley van Schalkwyk 2/30).

CITROËN

PERFORMANCE THAT LEAVES A MARK

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Only Remnants Of A Once-Terrific Rivalry Remain As India Show Depth And Batting Smarts To Turn Tables On Pakistan For Runaway 61-Run Win

THE TIMES OF INDIA IN COLOMBO

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Forget the outside noise. The gulf in class between India and Pakistan is simply enormous at the moment.

Going into the Sunday encounter, Pakistan had a lot of things in their favour. They have been in Lanka for a significant amount of time, played two games on slow pitches and were well adjusted to the conditions. Add to that, they won the toss and after taking the timid call of fielding, even had the dynamite Abhishek Sharma in the first over.

But what happened after that was just a re-run of the remains of a rivalry that once had the cricket world in awe.

They ran into Ishan Kishan, who wasn't probably on top of their planning charts. The left-hander was nowhere close to a T20 World Cup selection when India won the Asia Cup six months ago.

A superb Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy for Jharkhand and Shubman Gill's loss in T20 form led to the call up for the 23-year-old and today he is the toast of the nation.

The Premadasa pitch was super slow, the ball was not coming on to the bat, but what Ishan did in a period of 46 balls, of which he faced 39, left India on a very strong footing.

Later in the evening, the Indian bowlers had way too much quality and when Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya made it 15-3 in the first three overs, it was all but done.

After Bumrah's burst of pace and accuracy, it was Axar Patel's stump to stump spell of 2-29 that killed the game. What should give India even bigger satisfaction is the fact that their two spin trump cards Varun and Kuldeep Yadav didn't even have to finish their spells to wrap this one up by 61 runs.

But this game will be remembered for the way Kishan (77 off 40) batted. He launched into poceman Shaheen Shah Afridi, hitting him for a couple of sixes in the second over. And then, it was his assault on the spinners. The likes of Abrar Ahmed, Shadab Khan didn't know where to bowl to Ishan, as he held his shape, and generated tremendous power with his cut, pull and sweep shots.

The first six overs went for 62, which was significantly above par on this pitch.

Pakistan captain Agha made the mistake of not introducing his trump card Usman Tariq early and Ishan kept on creating havoc. There was zero fear in his approach as the shots flew from his bat.

It was allrounder Saim Ayub, who finally removed him with a delivery that hurried off just a bit. It was after Ishan's dismissal that you could see the demons that lay in the pitch.

None of the other batters could get going on a consistent basis and Ayub and Tariq took over from the 10th over. Tariq, with his box of tricks kept Surya and Tilak Verma in check as boundaries dried up.

To Surya's credit though, he didn't try to look for non-existent big shots. Instead, during his 29-ball 32, he kept the scoreboard ticking knowing that 175 would be above par.

Tilak and Hardik Pandya were dismissed off consecutive balls by Ayub in the 15th over, but India still had too much depth in the tank.

Surya and Dube kept waiting for the right bowlers to take on – in this case Abrar and Afridi – who came back for their second spells. It was another mistake by Agha to try these two later in the innings.

Abhishek Sharma in the first over. "Ishan batted the same way he has been batting in the last few games and domestic cricket. He thought something out of the box. At 0-1, someone needed to take responsibility in the Powerplay and he did that amazingly," Surya said.

Ishan conceded that the pitch wasn't easy to bat on despite getting 77 off 40 balls. "The pitch was not that easy. Sometimes, you just have to believe and focus on your strengths. I knew we had to put up a total like 160-170, which would be a good total for us," he said. "India-Pakistan is always a special game, not just for us but our country as well. They had pretty good spinners in their side. Winning this match against Pakistan will give us confidence going forward," the diminutive wicketkeeper-batter said.

Ishan also highlighted how Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya stood out with the new ball on this pitch. The duo pegged back Pakistan's chase in the first two overs, claiming three top-order wickets between them. "They (Bumrah and Hardik) bowled tremendously well. When I was batting, it did not feel like it was doing much for pacers. We know how Jassi (Bumrah) can bowl, whether with the new ball or at the death. Credit goes to Hardik for bowling in tight areas and for executing his plans," he said.

SUPER SHOW: Ishan Kishan plays a reverse sweep during his 40-ball 77 in Colombo on Sunday

AFP

SCOREBOARD

India: I Kishan b Ayub 77, A Sharma c Afridi b Agha 8, T Varma lbw b Ayub 25, S Yadav c Ayub b Tariq 32, H Pandya c Azam b Ayub 8, S Dube run out 27, R Singh not out 1), A Patel c Ayub b Afridi 0; **Extras: (lb2, w1) 3; Total: (7 wkts) 175; FoW:** 1-1, 2-86, 3-126, 4-126, 5-159, 6-175, 7-175; **Bowling:** Agha 2-0-18-1, Afridi 2-0-31-1, Ayub 4-0-25-3, Abrar 3-0-38-0, Shadab 1-0-17-0, Nawaz 4-0-28-0, Tariq 4-0-26-1.

Pakistan: S Farhan c Rinku Singh b Pandya 0, S Ayub lbw b Bumrah 6, S Agha c Pandya b Bumrah 4, B Azam b Patel 5, U Khan st Kishan b Patel 64, S Khan c Dube b Varma 14, M Nawaz c Dube b Kuldeep 4, F Ashraf c Rinku b Varun 10, S Afridi not out 23, A Ahmed lbw b Varun 8, U Tariq b Pandya 0; **Extras: (lb1, w3) 4; Total: (18 overs) 134; FoW:** 1-8, 2-8, 3-13, 4-34, 5-73, 6-78, 7-78, 8-107, 9-117; **Bowling:** Pandya 3-1-16-2, Bumrah 2-0-17-2, Patel 4-0-29-2, Varun 3-0-17-2, Kuldeep 3-0-14-1, Varma 2-0-11-1, Rinku 1-0-9-0.

Result: India won by 61 runs.

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'Wanted Pak to run as much as possible'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

61 India's win is their biggest in terms of runs vs Pak in T20Is.

2 Pak suffered their second biggest loss in T20 WC behind the 84-run defeat against West Indies in 2014.

> **After 0/1, someone had to take responsibility and the way Ishan did, was amazing." —Suryakumar Yadav**

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Rahul, Padikkal flatten Uttarakhand

Former Champions Ride On Pair's Centuries To Post 355/2 On Day 1

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Lucknow: Barely an hour into the Ranji Trophy semi-final here on Sunday, Uttarakhand captain Kunal Chandela's decision to bowl first seemed questionable. There was some seam movement and occasional uneven bounce early on, but little else to justify inserting a batting powerhouse like Karnataka on a largely placid surface — particularly with a spin-heavy attack.

Two of Karnataka's most elegant strokemakers — KL Rahul (141; 211b; 11x4; 5x6) and skipper Devdutt Padikkal (148 batting; 236b; 16x4, 2x6) — produced commanding centuries to power their side to 355/2 in 90 overs.

RANJI TROPHY

Karnataka began cautiously. Uttarakhand struck in the ninth over when Mayank Agarwal (5), attempting to drive a back of length delivery from Aditya Rawat (2/73), edged to Prashant Chopra at second slip. It proved to be the only breakthrough for the visitors across two sessions.

From that point, Rahul and Padikkal stitched together a commanding 278-run partnership for the second wicket — a stand defined by control and classical stroke play. In the near-empty expanse of the Ekana Cricket Stadium, the sound of bat meeting ball — crisp cuts, flowing drives and authoritative pulls — echoed through the day. Padikkal signalled his intent early, opening his account with a backfoot cut off Aditya to the boundary. A typically assured Rahul was a delight to watch. He drove fluently against the pacers and used his feet confidently against the spinners, rarely allowing the bowlers to settle.

TOP KNOCKS: Karnataka captain Devdutt Padikkal celebrates after bringing up his century in Lucknow on Sunday. Right: KL Rahul

His fifty came off 86 deliveries, brought up with a square cut off Aditya.

There were fleeting opportunities for Uttarakhand. Rahul, on 47, offered a chance when he advanced down the track, only for wicketkeeper Saurabh Rawat to miss a stumping. Later, when Rahul was on 136, a half-chance catch went begging.

Rahul reached his 25th first class century off 153 balls, continuing his rich vein of form following a match-winning 130 against Mumbai in the quarterfinal. Left-arm spinner Mayank Mishra, Uttarakhand's leading wicket-taker this season, was introduced in the 18th over but found little assistance from the surface and struggled to contain the flow of runs. At the other end, Padikkal matched his senior partner stroke for stroke. His half-century came briskly off 66 deliveries. The landmark moment of his innings arrived when he launched former Karnataka teammate J Suchith for a one-handed six over long-on to bring up his hundred.

Aditya eventually broke the stand when Rahul closed the face of the bat a touch early and offered a leading edge back to the bowler. It was, however, only a momentary respite for Uttarakhand.

With Karnataka's depth, the run feast continued. Karun Nair (37 batting) joined Padikkal and seamlessly carried the momentum forward. Karun marked the team's 300 with a deft glance to fine leg for four.

By the close of play, Uttarakhand's bold decision had backfired as Karnataka, powered by two masterful centuries, had turned the contest into a test of endurance for the semifinals debutants, with the promise of more to come.

SCOREBOARD

Karnataka (1st innings): KL Rahul c & b Rawat 141, Mayank Agarwal c Chopra b Rawat 5, Devdutt Padikkal (batting) 148, Karun Nair (batting) 37; **Extras** (NB-4, W-6, B-5, LB-9) 24; **Total (2 wkts; 90 overs) 355.**
Fall of wickets: 1-33, 2-296
Bowling: Abhay Negi 17-2-55-0, Jagmohan 16-3-44-0, Aditya Rawat 14-2-73-2, Mayank Mishra 18-1-68-0, J Suchith 20-0-43-0, Avneesh Sudha 21-8-30-0.

Record-breaking Chhetri, Siva power Bengaluru FC

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WINNING START: BFC players celebrate in Bengaluru on Sunday

Bengaluru: Thousands of fans (12,347 — official attendance) who packed the stands at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium welcomed the start of the Indian Super League in the Garden City, dancing in joy as former champions Bengaluru FC got their campaign off to a rocking start with a 2-0 win against debutants Sporting Club Delhi with goals from Sivasakthi and Sunil Chhetri here on Sunday.

In the end, the West Block Blues were treated to a Viking clap by the entire Blues squad, who took the lead in the first-half injury time through Siva (45+1) and Chhetri (90+2), who

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became the oldest goalscorer in ISL history with his record-breaking 78th goal at 41 years and 196 days, breaking the record of French legend Robert Pires (41 years, 15 days) who scored for FC Goa in 2014.

Chhetri, who came on as a substitute to loud cheers in the 78th minute, found the mark by firing into an empty goal after Delhi 'keeper Vishal Yadav rushed out in vain to avert the danger.

After an uninspiring first session, it was the home team who went to the dressing room in front. The Blues woke up just in time and took the lead through Siva Sakthi N in the first minute of injury time after surviving a big scare. As the first half drew towards the end, Delhi had a great chance as Augustine Lalrochana only had BFC goalie Gurpreet Singh Sandhu to beat. The young winger from Aizawl latched on to a long ball and sped into the box before unleashing a right-footer. But BFC survived as Sandhu dived to his right and averted the danger by conceding a corner.

The jolt was enough to get the Blues out of their slumber and their reaction gave them the lead. The move took shape through the left, where Ashique Kuruniyan had made repeated inroads. This time, the cross came down nicely to an unmarked Nikhil Poojary on the right, who swiftly relayed the ball to an alert Sivasakthi in the six-yard box to convert.

Towards the hour mark, Siva went close to doubling the lead following a probing run by Suresh Singh, but the Delhi 'keeper Vishal palmed away the long ball from Rahul Bheke and Siva failed to make use of the chance that came his way.

After Delhi missed a chance to take the lead at the fag end of the first half, they had another opportunity to draw level towards the end of the regulation time, but this time substitute Alex Saji headed into the side netting.

Results: Bengaluru FC 2 (Sivasakthi 45+1, Sunil Chhetri 90+2) bt SC Delhi 0; Jamshedpur FC 1 (Madih Talal 9) bt Mohammedan SC 0. **Today's match:** East Bengal vs NorthEast United (7:30 pm).

SNAP SHOTS

Yashaswini & Harmeet finish runner-up

Harmeet Desai and Yashaswini Ghorpade finished runners-up in mixed doubles after they went down to Romanian second seeds Eduard Ionesca and Bernadette Szocs in the final in the WTT Star Contender in Chennai on Sunday. Desai and Yashaswini lost 0-3 (9-11, 2-11, 8-11).

Kitata wins Seville Marathon in photo finish: Ethiopia's Shura Kitata won the Seville Marathon men's race after a photo finish with compatriot Asrar Abderehman on Sunday, while Finland's Alisa Vainio stunned a strong African field to triumph in the women's contest. The 41st edition produced a lung-busting finale, with Kitata and Abderehman inseparable after 42km and both given the same time of 2:03:59 — the second-best in the event's history — with the pair throwing themselves over the finish line. Vainio accelerated to victory in 2:20:39, breaking her Finnish national record.

Sureshkumar shocks Carboni: Only securing his entry at the last-minute, 26-year-old M Sureshkumar lit up day one of the ATP Delhi Open 2026 with a come-from-behind 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 win over fifth seed Lorenzo Carboni of Italy in the men's singles first qualifying round in New Delhi on Sunday. Ramkumar Ramanathan, starting as a wild card in qualifying, beat Tsung-Hao Huang of Chinese Taipei in straight sets, 6-1, 6-3.

Al-Ameen, Adhiyamaan College crowned champions: Al-Ameen College edged past Jain University 3-2 to clinch the Dr Issac Abraham Memorial hockey tournament in Bengaluru on Sunday. Adhiyamaan College of Engineering bagged the Dr. Noel Rasquinha Memorial title after thumping BMS College of Engineering 7-0 in the final.

Results: Final: Dr. Issac Abraham Memorial: Al-Ameen College 3 (Vittal 30, 57, Raju 45) bt Jain University 2 (Gaurav 24, Sagar 33). **Dr. Noel Rasquinha Memorial Final:** Adhiyamaan College of Engineering 7 (Priyadarshan 2, 41, 44, Gunamurthi 26, Suriya 24, Harish 38, Sheenik 43) bt BMS College of Engineering 0. **Semis:** Adhiyamaan College of Engineering 6 (Priyadarshan 7, 9, 30, Akash 25, 45, Suriya 55) bt Indian Institute of Science 1 (Balaram 29)

Evaido clinches feature: Aman Altaf Hussain-trained Evaido — ridden by Akshay Kumar — won the Homi Mody Trophy, the feature event of the Mumbai races on Sunday.

Gharami stands tall for Bengal again

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JUBILANT: Sudip Gharami

Kalyani: It was even-stevens at the end of Day 1 of the Ranji Trophy semifinal between Bengal and Jammu & Kashmir at the Bengal Cricket Academy (BCA) ground here on Sunday.

Sudip Gharami once again stood tall to take the hosts to a position of strength after being put in to bat on losing the toss. The visitors roared back late by picking up the wicket of Shahbaz Ahmed on the penultimate ball of the day to keep the match tantalizingly poised.

J&K got an early breakthrough when left-arm pacer Sunil Kumar got opener Sudip Chatterjee caught in the slips in the second over of the

CRICKET

morning. But Gharami continued from where he left against Andhra in the quarterfinal at this same venue last week when he got his career-best 299. The 26-year-old faced 227 deliveries to stay undefeated on 136 as Bengal went to stumps at 249 for five.

The first hour proved to be challenging for the Bengal batters as both opener Abhimanyu Easwaran and Gharami looked tentative against some precision bowling by the J&K pacers. Gharami survived two DRS calls and Easwaran a caught behind appeal. But the two gradually grew in confidence as Bengal went to lunch at 80 for one. J&K hit back hard when their pacer Auqib Nabi clean bowled Easwaran in the second over after the break and then had Suraj Sindhu Jaiswal, promoted up the order as in the last match, caught behind in his very next over to reduce Bengal to 89 for three.

Nabi looked dangerous coming in for his second spell after change of ends to pick two wickets giving away 18 runs in seven overs bowled on either side of the lunch interval.

Bengal could have been in a worse position had Anushtup Majumder not survived a tough chance at second slip off Sunil even before opening his account. J&K, however, allowed Bengal to consolidate when wicketkeeper Kanhaiya Wadhawan dropped a regulation catch off Shahbaz with Nabi being the unfortunate bowler.

Brief scores: Bengal 249/5 in 79.6 overs (S Gharami batting 136, A Easwaran 49, Shahbaz 42; Auqib Nabi 3-48, Sunil Kumar 2-32) vs **J&K**.

Himachal fight back

Times News Network

KEY WICKETS: Hardik Raj

Himachal Pradesh dominated the proceedings against Karnataka on Day 3 of their Col CK Nayudu Trophy U-23 league match on Sunday.

Resuming at 134/1 at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Stadium in Amtar, Himachal batters tilted the scales heavily in their favour as they reached 473/6 when stumps were

CK NAYUDU TROPHY

drawn. Overnight batters Atul Jaswal (54) and Inesh Mahajan (62) stitched together a second-wicket stand of 76 off 120 deliveries to hand the hosts a strong start to the penultimate day. Atul, who brought up his half-century, added 19 to his overnight score before Manvanth Kumar handed Karnataka the first breakthrough of the day.

However, the hosts kept the scoreboard ticking as Vaibhav Kalta and captain Mridul Surroch struck crucial half-centuries to frustrate the visiting side. After spinner Shashi Kumar dismissed Inesh in the 57th over, Vaibhav and Mridul stitched together a strong fourth-wicket partnership - scoring 91 off 133 deliveries. The pair scored in tandem before Hardik Raj came to Karnataka's rescue momentarily, picking up two wickets in quick succession. After dismissing Vaibhav in the 85th over, two overs later, Hardik accounted for Amanpreet Singh's wicket.

Mridul inched closer to a century before Yashovardhan Parantap got onto the wicket-taker's list with the big scalp of the captain in the 99th over. Mridul departed for a solid 97 off 128 deliveries - peppered with eight boundaries and four sixes.

Despite the skipper's wicket, there was no respite for Karnataka as Deep Singh and Daksh Narayan's unbeaten stand saw the hosts stitch together the highest partnership. The duo piled an unbeaten 98 for the seventh-wicket to trail Karnataka by 64 runs. Both Deep (52 batting) and Daksh (52 batting) completed their half-centuries just before the end of day's play.

Brief scores: Karnataka: 537 vs Himachal Pradesh: 473/6 (o/n 134/1) in 126 overs (Atul Jaswal 54, Inesh Mahajan 62, Vaibhav Kalta 64, Mridul Surroch 97, Deep Singh 52 batting, Daksh Narayan 52 batting; Hardik Raj 2-80).

Saloni spins Karnataka to victory

Times News Network

Saloni P stole the limelight with a six-wicket haul to power Karnataka to a comfortable eight-wicket victory over Assam in the BCCI Senior Women's One Day Trophy in Rajkot on

WOM'S ONE DAYERS

Saturday. Invited to bat, Assam were bowled out for 128 in 38.4 overs. Opener Amontika Munda waged a lone battle with a 83-ball 57 as the rest of the lineup made a beeline for the dressing room. Seven batters registered single-digit scores as Karnataka struck at regular intervals. While spinner Saloni returned figures of 6/21, Rajeshwari (1/20), BG Tejashwini (1/11) and Niki Prasad (1/7) chipped in with a wicket apiece to put Karnataka in the driver's seat.

In reply, Karnataka chased the target in 15.2 overs for the loss of two wickets. Niki Prasad top-scored with a 21-ball 39 as Karnataka continued their unbeaten run. With five wins from five matches, the S Shubha-led side top the Group A table with 20 points. Karnataka will next take on Maharashtra in a top-of-the-table clash in Rajkot on Monday.

Brief scores: Assam: 128 all out in 38.4 overs (Amontika Munda 57; Saloni P 6-21) lost to **Karnataka: 129/2 in 15.2 overs** (Shishira Gowda 27, Shreya Chavan 33 n.o., Niki Prasad 39 n.o.).

Atletico go down to Rayo Vallecano

TUSSLE: Atletico Madrid's Nico Gonzalez and Rayo Vallecano's Isi Palazon (R) vie for a header

Rayo Vallecano waltzed to a 3-0 victory over Atletico Madrid on Sunday in La Liga, leaving Diego Simeone's side 15 points behind leaders Real Madrid. Atletico dropped to fourth after their heavy defeat at Leganes's Butarque stadium, where Rayo hosted the fixture due to pitch problems at their own Vallecas ground.

Fran Perez, Oscar Valentin and Nobel Mendy struck for Rayo, who thoroughly deserved their triumph against an Atletico side that had thrashed Spanish champions Barcelona 4-0 in the Copa del Rey on Thursday. With the Spanish cup their best chance of silverware this season it has seemed that Atletico

FOOTBALL

have lacked some focus in La Liga, and that was reflected in this humbling by their city rivals. The Rojiblancos have not won in their last three league matches.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, Vinicius Jr struck twice from the penalty spot as Real Madrid powered to a 4-1 home victory over Real Sociedad that sent them provisionally to the top of La Liga.

LEEDS SURVIVE SCARE

Leeds survived an FA Cup scare to reach the fifth round with a penalty shoot-out victory against second-tier Birmingham on Sunday. Birmingham substitute Patrick Roberts snatched an 89th-minute equaliser at St Andrew's to cancel out Lukas Nmecha's 49th-minute opener for Leeds. With a feisty fourth round tie level at 1-1 after extra-time, Leeds won the shoot-out 4-2. Mohamed Salah struck as Liverpool cruised into the FA Cup fifth round with a 3-0 win over Brighton on Saturday.

Select results: Spanish league: Real Oviedo 1 (Chaira 39) lost to Athletic Bilbao 2 (Jauregizar 58, Sancet 71-pen); Rayo Vallecano 3 (Perez 30, Valentin 45, Mendy 76) bt Atletico Madrid 0. **Saturday:** Real Madrid 4 (Garcia 5, Vinicius 25-pen, 48-pen, Valverde 58) bt Real Sociedad 1 (Oyarzabal 35-pen). **FA Cup (fourth round):** Birmingham 1 (Roberts 89) Leeds 1 (Nmecha 49) (aet, Leeds won 4-2 on penalties). **Saturday:** Liverpool 3 (Jones 42, Szoboszlai 56, Salah 81-pen) bt Brighton 0. **Italian league:** Udinese 1 (Solet 39) lost to Sassuolo 2 (Laurienté 56, Pinamonti 58); Parma 2 (Bernabe 5, Pellegrino 90+3) bt Verona 1 (Harroui 43-pen). AGENCIES

Clinical India crush Australia

TOP SHOW: Arundhati Reddy

Sydney: India were clinical with both bat and ball as they crushed Australia by 21 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method in the first Women's T20I to start their tour Down Under on a resounding note here on Sunday.

FIRST T20I

Seamer Arundhati Reddy (4/22) led an excellent bowling display as India packed off Australia for 133.

Such was the Indian bowlers' performance that Australia were bundled out with two overs to spare. In reply, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana was unbeaten on a 17-ball 16 with Jemimah Rodrigues giving her company, when the heavens opened up to force an interruption. Play could not resume after that and India, who were 50 for one in 5.1 overs, were declared deserving winners. The DLS par score after 5.1 overs was 29. The big-hitting Shafali Verma played her part before being dismissed by Australia's new skipper Sophie Molineux, smashing her way to an 11-ball 21.

Brief scores: Australia: 133 all out in 18 overs (Phoebe Litchfield 26, Georgia Wareham 30; Renuka Singh 2-34, Arundhati Reddy 4-22, Shree Charani 2-16) lost to **India: 50/1 via DLS method**. PTI

Vrinda & spinners power India past Pak

Bangkok: Skipper Radha Yadav led a dominant spin display before Vrinda Dinesh hammered a blazing half-century as India A Women cruised to an emphatic eight-wicket win over Pakistan A Women in the Women's Asia Cup Rising Stars here on Sunday.

The victory marked India A's first win of the tournament. The win lifted India A to second place in Group A behind the UAE.

Brief scores: Pakistan A: 93 all out (Sanna Thakor 2-24, Radha Yadav (2-13), Prema Rawat (2-16) lost to **India A: 97/2 in 10.3 overs** (Dinesh Vrinda 55 n.o., Anushka Sharma 24). PTI

Listless India end winless at home

Arnab Seal @timesofindia.com

Rourkela: Since the 2023 World Cup, India played eight times at Birsa Munda Stadium here and never lost a match but it all changed this year as India lost all their four Pro League matches including the last game on Sunday evening which Argentina won 4-2.

It was once again a below-par showing from the hosts as they kept making poor mistakes, failed to convert the chances and looked out of sorts even when they had the ball. Even Harmanpreet Singh looked a pale shadow of himself. They also gave away nine penalty corners from which Argentina scored twice. It could have been even more if one of their goals wasn't disallowed and they didn't hit the framework twice.

HOCKEY

The only positive was Hardik Singh's performance, who played like a monster throughout the match. And it was from his through pass that Aditya Arjun Lalage scored India's opener in the 50th minute. India's second goal came with a minute left in the match when Sanjay converted a penalty stroke. As for Argentina, Tadeo Marcucci (28th, 49th), Tomas Domene (19th) and Lucio Mendez (43rd) were on target.

Speaking after the match, coach Craig Fulton rued the missed chances and failure to win more PCs but was pleased with how Rosan Kujur played on his debut.

"Not the results we wanted, but there were some good moments today (Sunday). I thought Rosan did well on his first cap. I thought Aditya was a breath of fresh air. The one he hit over the top – that would have been a great time to score," said Fulton.

Ton-up Aadesh powers BEML SC

Times News Network

Bengaluru: Aadesh Urs struck a brisk century to power BEML (2) Sports Club, Mysuru to a 47-run win over NAL Staff Club in the KSCA Group II – Division II league cum knockout tournament here recently.

Asked to bat, openers Aadesh Urs and Mohith L took BEML to a competitive total of 201/5 in 20 overs. The duo stitched together a quick-fire opening stand - scoring 130 (78 balls). Aadesh took the NAL bowlers to the cleaners with a 66-ball 119. Scoring at a rate of 180.30, his knock was studded with fifteen boundaries and four sixes. On the other hand, Mohith L lent apt support, scoring a crucial 41-ball 67 (11x4). In reply, NAL struggled to build partnerships as Roshan Raju led a clinical bowling effort for BEML. Barring Mahesh N's 41-ball 55 the rest of the lineup failed to fire as NAL was restricted to 154/6 in 20 overs.

In another match, Santosh Singh (5/13) returned a five-wicket haul to power BDSA, South Western Railway, Bengaluru to a seven-wicket victory over Bhagirathi Group.

Brief scores: BEML (2) SC, Mysuru: 201/5 in 20 overs (Mohith L 67, Aadesh Urs 119 (66b, 15x4, 4x6); Mahabaleshwar Chowdari 2-43) bt **NAL Staff Club: 154/6 in 20 overs** (Mahesh N 55; R Roshan Raju 3-23). **BDSA, South Western Railway, Bengaluru: 105 all out in 16.5 overs** (Santosh Singh 5-13, Mahesh Kashyap 2-27) lost to **Bhagirathi Group: 108/3 in 11.4 overs** (Karan Mahesh 51, Kathandi SJ 30 n.o.). **Infosys CC: 201/8 in 20 overs** (Srinath Ramachandra 42, Swaroop SK 56; Pratyush Srivatsa 33, Praveen 33; Sampath Kumar 3-39) bt **BWSSB Employees Association: 189/7 in 20 overs** (Adarsh MA 104 (55b, 14x4, 3x6); Ajay Bhide 2-23, Pratyush Srivatsa 2-30). **Hatti Gold Mines CC: 134/7 in 20 overs** (Shridhar Jagatap 27 n.o.; Harsh Oza 2-20, Gopi K 3-18, Suraj VL 3-22) bt **BEML Rail Coach: 130/8 in 20 overs** (Vineeth Manjunath 24; Mahabaleshwar Prabhu 3-21). **L&T Construction Equipments SC: 178/7 in 20 overs** (Prathviraj KD 90 n.o., Vikram Aravinth 42, Naveera HM 2-37, Dheeraj Naik 2-29) bt **Commercial Tax CC: 137/5 in 20 overs** (Vijay Kumar 26, Dheeraj Naik 29 n.o.; Osman Mohan 2-26). **Union Bank of India: 176/3 in 20 overs** (Syed Salahuddin 47, Gowtha Basagara 73 n.o., Dheeraj Singh 2-36) bt **CIL SC: 107/6 in 20 overs** (Vishal Kumar 73; Manjunath R 2-36). **CMTI Club: 121/9 in 20 overs** (Kowshan Y 57, Mara 37 n.o.; Ashwani Mishra 2-27, Abhilash R 2-30) lost to **Indian Air Force, Yelahanka: 122/4 in 15.2 overs** (Kulbir Kasbu 36, Ankit Phogat 49; Krishnaswamy 40 2-33). **South Railway Institute, Mysuru: 105/9 in 20 overs** (Dhananjaya S 20; Akshay BV 2-23, Akash Pattar 2-20, Akash LN 2-20) lost to **Karnataka Postal SC: 107/9 in 20 overs** (Shivaraj R 36, Dhakshith P 2-24, Sahas BS 2-13, Raghavendra MV 4-13). **Deccan Herald & Prajavani SC: 96 all out in 18 overs** (Kotikapudi Rao 3-23, Maghabhushan 2-6, Anil Kumar 2-20) bt **EPF Sports & Recreation Club: 85 all out in 19 overs** (Vikram 4-15, Saravanan S 2-7). **Karnataka State Police CC: 161/6 in 20 overs** (Somashekara Murthy 49 n.o., Abhishek VG 30 n.o.; Shahshad Hussain 3-39, Deepak Singh 2-25) bt **AOE SC: 132/8 in 20 overs** (Deepak Singh 31, Chandra 25, Akash V 29; Ashrithaya 2-38, Shiva Muttu 2-22). **LRDE SC: 128/7 in 20 overs** (Deepak Shukla 29, Vishwa K 38; Sitaram Meena 2-13, Somala Kumar 2-21, Lokesh 4-3-18) lost to **Railway Institute, Krishnarajapuram: 134/3 in 17.4 overs** (Akhil LK 56 n.o., Dhruvith M 39 n.o.; Bathula Suresh 2-22). **Karnataka Government Secretariat Club: 138 all out in 20 overs** (Sravan Ramesh 70, Ramesh DS 3-36, Kumar Raj 2-29, Adarsha CB 2-19) lost to **Bangalore Dairy SC: 132/4 in 17.4 overs** (Kishore Kumar 36, Praveen D 25 n.o., Prajwal Prakash 2-28). **BHEL EDN SC: 117 all out in 18.2 overs** (Praveen Pattar 39; Abhishek Kumar 3-21, Ashish Kumar 2-29, Aman Kush 2-16) lost to **Indian Air Force, Jalahalli: 118/4 in 14.1 overs** (Rishi Shetty 49, Aditya Kumar 26). **BHEL EPD CSRD: 92 all out in 20 overs** (Rahul Krish 2-19, Krishnamurthy T 2-12) lost to **Continental Automotive CC: 96/3 in 18.5 overs** (Thejas L 39, Vinoth R 2-21). **ITI SC: 165/7 in 20 overs** (Josiah Raj 46, Dr. Prabhu G 41, R Nithin 27; Ishaan S 2-25, Ramegowda CS 2-34) bt **Triton SC, Mysuru: 141/9 in 17.5 overs** (Yashwanth Patel 53, Ishaan S 26, Prajwal TS 43 n.o.; Dhana Prakash 2-26, Thofique R 2-33, Gautam Goskar 2-35). **Titan Company Limited CC: 204/6 in 20 overs** (Karna Vamshi 62, Dheeraj Mohan 40; Basavaraja KB 2-45) bt **ITC SC: 140/6 in 20 overs** (Naveen Kumar 57, Chandrashekar R 24; Pavan Kumar 3-32). **Bosch SC, Bengaluru: 240/2 in 20 overs** (Samarth Srinivas 44, Srinivasamurthy Rao 79, Sharath Sriniwas 92 n.o.) bt **ADDCC: 63 all out in 19.1 overs** (Anogh R 3-8, Chiranth S 2-18). **BEL SC: 230/2 in 20 overs** (Nagendra Babu 00, Shiva V 43, Goutham Reddy 96 n.o.) bt **Bosch SC, Naganathapura: 120/9 in 20 overs** (Chethan Kumar 38; Raghunandan H 4-23). **Secretariat CC: 264/7 in 20 overs** (Karan 57, Aryaman Jhalani 72, Tanish Krishna 27 n.o.; Md Hussain 2-56, Charan Raj 3-29) bt **SWR Rail Club, Bengaluru: 95/7 in 20 overs** (Mahesh Reddy 31; Riyaz Pasha 2-25, Sharath Gola 2-12). **Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike: 136/4 in 20 overs** (Nagarjun TM 71 n.o., Sanjay Gorur 33; Pavan Kalyan 2-33) bt **Advocates Association CC: 130/8 in 20 overs** (R Jagadish 27, Vijay Kumar 44; Sanjay Gorur 2-28, Sabadevanya Padabi 2-24). **L30 SC: 118/9 in 20 overs** (Karan U 27, Neeraj 20, Abhin SP 27) lost to **Bangalore Telephones CC: 121/2 in 17.1 overs** (Akram 68 n.o., Rakshith K 29 n.o.).

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